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## STYLISTIC CONSIDERATIONS OF CALDERON'S OPERA LIBRETTOS

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The two plays of Calderón that were set to music in their entirety have a number of common characteristics beyond those associated with the mythological plays as a whole. Both of the plays were performed in 1660, *La púrpura de la rosa* on January 17 to celebrate the marriage of the Infanta María Teresa to Louis XIV of France, and *Celos aun del aire matan* on December 5 to celebrate the third birthday of the Infante Felipe Próspero.<sup>1</sup> Presented in the Palacio del Buen Retiro, set to music by Juan Hidalgo, staged with the appropriate elaborate machinery, and performed by many of the same actors,<sup>2</sup> the two plays deal with similar mythological themes: a victim of love's power is killed because of the jealousy of a god, but there are twin apotheoses in which Adonis, in *Púrpura*, and Céfalos and Pocris, in *Celos*, are turned into celestial entities by the great and good power of the very love that destroyed them.<sup>3</sup> On the structural and poetic levels there exist other similarities that tie these two works together even more. Besides the images and metaphors conventionalized in the *comedia*: «flores,» «sol,» «clavel,» and «jazmín,» for example, there are a number of locutions that make the transition from one play to the other without alteration, such as the stammering «Yo...si...caundo...» repeated once in *Púrpura* and three times in *Celos*.<sup>4</sup> While many of these similarities can be ascribed to the chronologic circumstances of their appearance in the works of Calderón, other stylistic aspects of the two plays may well be considered to have their origins in the nature of the play as librettos which must take into account their musical accompaniments. This paper will address the relationship between poetry and music based on the music of Juan Hidalgo for *Celos aun del aire matan*,<sup>5</sup> and on that of Tomás

de Torrejón y Velasco for *La púrpura de la rosa*. While Torrejón's music is not the original, it does come from a performance of the play in Lima in 1701 and therefore exhibits much of the same musicological heritage as Hidalgo's 1660 score for *Celos*.<sup>6</sup> The principal difference between the two scores is that Hidalgo's is assumed to be the product of a collaboration with Calderón while Torrejón's is clearly music added to the text at a later date.

The final years of the seventeenth century are marked in the history of music in the theater by the attempt on the parts of both playwright and the composer to bring together music and text with equal importance. Unlike earlier theatrical music, the music in both of these plays is not merely incidental or superficial, but carries the plot along with music appropriate to the content of the poetic text. Of course, the music of these plays adheres to contemporary norms of musical excellence, that is, it varies in the plays from through-composed recitative to strophic variations, sometimes in *arioso* style, of melodies based on dance rhythms. The style of the day was to repeat stanzas of music many times (sometimes more than twenty) and to try to adjust the music to the sometimes very lengthy speeches of the characters. The composers imitated their Italian models by introducing text painting into the music in order to have the music reflect the sentiment of the verse,<sup>7</sup> but in general the music was repetitive and tedious to the modern listener (as were the poetic verses at times). The challenge to both composer and playwright was to have each component of the opera provide interest for the other, and in this mixture of genres we find some fascinating stylistic anomalies.

Basically, the recitative portions of the librettos are dialog, usually sung in strict syllabic fashion. There were, of course, some problems. For example, the scansion of verse allows for elision between vowels regardless of the persons speaking. When the composer sets the verse to music, the elision must be destroyed unless there is a desire for two characters to sing two different syllables at the same time. As a result, the octosyllabic line, «a una duda a buen seguro,» shared as it is by Chato and Celfa in *Púrpura*, takes nine notes. But when it is placed after the preceding verse, the two together consume sixteen notes, appropriate for two eight-syllable lines, because the preceding line ended in an *aguda*. While it is standard practice in poetry to count a final *aguda* as two syllables, it is not necessarily standard practice in music to count it as two notes. As a result, the recitative syllabic style counts real syllables instead of poetic ones, and both plays are brimming with metrically irregular lines. To the listener, unless one is accustomed to counting musical measures, this subtle stylistic abnormality is unobtrusive (*Púrpura*, pp. 27-28, mm. 675-82).

Interest can be developed in the recitative passages in a number of ways, some of which are identical to those of the *comedia* in general. Of course, the words themselves and the actions that accompany them provide the substance of the drama. In addition to these obvious components of any play, these two plays exhibit two other devices common in the *comedia* but used to special effect here. One is the use of voices offstage; the other is the use of parallel constructions. The voices offstage provide not only an additional element of spectacle and wonder, but also interrupt the *recitativo secco* with different music and with a different point of origin of the music. These offstage voices are found no fewer than twenty-seven times in *Púrpura* (fourteen by individuals and thirteen by the chorus) and thirty-nine times in *Celos* (twenty-one times by individuals and eighteen by the chorus). Parallel constructions, including not only correlative constructions used in Baroque poetry in general but also such simple devices as the anaphoric use of «¡Ay de aquel...!» (*Púrpura*, pp. 75-79, mm. 1828-1921) or the repeated questions of Céfalo to Pocris: «¿No visteis estrellas?», «¿No visteis flores?», «No oísteis aves?» (*Celos*, II, 1163-65) make use of the very repetition of the recitative to build suspense and poetic tension. Changes in tempo also vary otherwise monotonous passages, although there are very few direct indications of tempo in the music, and then only «despacio» or «aprisa» (*Púrpura*, p. 72, m. 1746; *Celos*, I, 197; II, 762, 766). Finally, long passages can be divided into shorter sections of duple and triple meter, allowing for further rhythmic variations for the delivery of the text (e.g., *Púrpura*, pp. 6-14, mm. 126-288).

As one might assume, the strophic variations to a large degree derive their interest from the same sources as the recitative sections. Because the variations are repeated so many times, however, the potential for tedium is greater. To relieve this monotony, the strophes are varied in terms of meter, rhyme, and rhythm (as were the strophic variations of Baroque music in general). The same problems of poetic meter discussed above in relation to recitatives are helpful variations in the strophic passages. If the number of textual (rather than poetic) syllables is eight one time and seven the next, the basic melodic line can adjust the number of notes accordingly. Moreover, the composer will at times deliberately vary the number of notes from repetition to repetition, including occasional melismas as adornment to the strophic line. A further variation in the strophic sections stems from the basis of Spanish music itself, the hemiola, which may be viewed as six beats, or three groups of two beats, or two groups of three beats.<sup>8</sup> Both Hidalgo's and Torrejón's music display this syncopated rhythm as the basis for their compositions, and it is precisely this syncopation

that gives these two operas their national character as Spanish.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to metric variation, there also exists the variation of distribution of lines among characters. At times this distribution is merely that among characters by line (e.g. *Celos*, I, 624-31), at other times it shows a marked tendency to interrupt not only the strophic character of the passage, but also the integrity of the line, thereby disturbing the most fundamental element of poetry (e.g., *Púrpura*, pp. 67-70, mm. 1592-1673). The extreme example of this kind of distributional variation is found in those passages in which three or more different characters share one line of poetry or melody (e.g., *Púrpura*, p. 77, mm. 1874-84). In many instances this Baroque use of parallel distribution in music corresponds to the correlative nature of poetry of the period, and the «relación tetramembre» can be seen in music just as it can in poetry.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the most important feature of the strophic variations to be found in these operas is the use of the chorus. Not only does the chorus perform a character function much as the Greek chorus did, to reveal moral purpose where appropriate,<sup>11</sup> but the chorus was also able to alter the repetition of the strophes in two ways. The music can be made to be antiphonal merely by opposing the chorus to a character (*Púrpura*, pp. 104-13, mm. 106-321) or by separating the chorus into two or more parts and having them counter each other, as in the use of the two choruses in *Celos*, especially in the opening of Act II. In addition to antiphony, the chorus can also be used for a *ripieno* effect in accompaniment of the soloist for the sake of variation, and to mark a cadence at the end of the sequence of strophic variations. While these *ripieno* uses of the chorus are not generally marked in the libretto nor in the music, there are some places in which the *ripieno* is clearly indicated (*Celos*, II, 877-80, 942).

A final medium of variation (and, at the same time, structural unity) is the use of the refrain.<sup>12</sup> Both of these plays use a great many refrains, although it is clear that *Celos* provides a much more developed model than *Púrpura*. The refrains are basically of two types, exact repetition, and repetition with variations. The variations can be of text, of music, or of both. The most frequent type of refrain by far is the exact repetition, such as Céfalo's «Ven, Aura, ven» (*Celos*, III, 211 ff.). Of the eleven refrains in *Celos*, nine are exact in their repetitions. *Púrpura* has a much less developed scheme of refrains. The most important use of repetitive verse is the refrain, «No puede Amor/hacer mi dicha mayor» and its variant, «Sí puede Amor/hacer mi dicha mayor», (pp. 104-13, mm. 106-321). In general, these refrains provide variation within the recitative and strophic sections of the music, and a unifying element within the structure. The

refrain system of *Celos* is so highly elaborate that it is possible to divide the entire work into eleven sections each held together by its respective refrain.

Faced with all of these elements of Baroque musical composition, what can be the response of the poet? It should be noted that many of these musical requisities have their corresponding counterparts in Baroque poetry: a variety of metric styles, the use of parallel and correlative elements, and stylization. To conclude this paper I should like to summarize some of the elements in the poetry of these two plays that seem to respond directly to the imperatives of the recitative and strophic variation styles found in the music.

*Celos* and *Púrpura* are not alone in their use not only of polymetric versification but even of unclassifiable and irregular verses.<sup>13</sup> *Púrpura*, however, has one long section that is composed of alternating verses of *arte mayor* and *arte menor*, the longer lines having eight, nine, ten, eleven, or twelve syllables, and the shorter always having six, rhyming in assonance (pp. 113-15, mm. 322-402). In addition to this regularized but unnamed meter, there is also a section of villancicos, each villancico composed of twelve to fourteen lines: a two or four line refrain («No puede amor/hacer mi dicha mayor,» etc.), two *quintetos*, each with one or two lines of *arte menor* having four musical syllables, although some have four and others have five poetic syllables (pp. 104-113, mm. 106-321).<sup>14</sup> The first *quinteto* is the *mudanza* of the villancico, the second is the *enlace*. The first has a variety of rhyme schemes, the second is always AaBBC, returning to the refrain cC or cCcC. In addition, the refrain is sung by four-part harmony and scored to provide an even more impressive effect for the refrain. What is particularly curious is that the exact same scheme is used in *Celos*, only in a more complex environment (II, 885-978). The section begins with three *quintetos* composed of four seven-syllable and one eleven-syllable lines: abbaA, followed by a choral section of two eight-syllable lines and the forthcoming refrain of two ten-syllable lines: «¡Muera el amor y viva el olvido! ¡Viva el olvido y muera el amor!» After one more *quinteto*, we have the first presentation of the villancico strophes, two *quintetos* of eight and four syllable lines, ABBAa CcDDe, followed by the two-line refrain, ED. Next come two more *quintetos* of seven and eleven syllable lines, and the final four repetitions of the villancico. The music of this section is through composed except for the choral refrain that corresponds to the poetic refrain. The unusual mixture of *arte mayor* and *arte menor* can be attributed to the Baroque desire for variation in both music and poetry. It should be kept in mind, however, that this particular metric pattern for a villancico is, to the best of my knowledge, found only in *Púrpura*

and *Celos*.

As one might suspect, there are additional metric anomalies, such as the use of *romances* with *estribillos* (refrains sometimes as long as four lines with differing meter, as in *Celos*, II, 996ff.), that may or may not fit perfectly into the established rhyme scheme; the mixture of octosyllabic *romance* with two lines of *romance heroico* (*Celos*, III, 2351-2410);<sup>15</sup> and the irregular combination of alternating *arte mayor* and *arte menor* lines rhyming in assonance with a varying number of syllables in each line. *Púrpura* even glosses a *romance* by Góngora, «En un pastoral albergue» (pp. 131-43, mm. 342-666).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as was mentioned earlier, even within more or less regular meters, such as *romances*, there is an alarming abundance of irregular lines throughout both plays.

Apart from the rather pedestrian considerations of versification, there are other elements of Baroque poetry that can be found in these two plays that, although they are not necessarily found only in the *comedias de música*, take on new meaning in light of the affective domain of music. For example, Céfalo's speech at the end of Act III when he discovers that he has mistakenly killed Pocris: «Pocris bella, Pocris mía, / dulce dueño, esposa amada,» is accompanied by an Italian *lamento*, according to Jack Sage («Nouvelles,» p. 109), with a melody characterized by affective repetition and meter characterized by both rhythmic and prosodic dislocation of stress, caused by the syncopation of the musical, and therefore the textual, line. Text painting, sometimes more obvious, sometimes less, is evident throughout. Perhaps the most important use of text painting is found in *Celos*, and it occurs in Act III (170ff) on the word «matan.» while «matan» is always a word of strong connotations, it appears five times in *Celos* accompanied by a so-called «Corelli clash,» or an unresolved dissonance, creating a very agitated feeling for the pronunciation of the word. In another vein, the use of long, correlative passages, typical of much of Calderón's poetry, can be made not only more meaningful but more lyrical when put to such lovely melodic recitatives as that Hidalgo wrote for Aura's speech in *Celos*, I, 86-98, or the corresponding catalog in *Púrpura*, repeated twice by the chorus (pp. 55-56, 57-59, mm. 1390-1422, 1435-1467).

Clearly very few people spoke as they might sing the melodies of Hidalgo or Torrejón. The music makes the pronunciation of the words alter its natural flow somewhat, speeding up in certain places, slowing down in others. In this sense, the text has been compromised for the sake of the music, even though in general it is evident that playwright and composer tried to blend music and text in equal measure. But, then again, it can also be said that few people spoke as

Calderón wrote for these plays. The *comedia*, especially the *comedia de música*, is the product of the Baroque ideal of elegance and *admiratio*, tension and resolution, repetition and variation. By studying the most extreme forms of this artificial genre, the opera librettos by Calderón, perhaps we can come to a further understanding of the other *comedias* of Calderón and other playwrights. I am not convinced, as Menéndez y Pelayo asserted, that these mythological plays are part of Calderón's work that fall into the category of «inferior genres,» especially when one takes them together with their music.<sup>17</sup> Nor do I fully agree with Everett Hesse that Calderón compromised his art just for the sake of royal favor (although the assertion is probably partly correct).<sup>18</sup> These plays are not *comedias*, they are librettos, and the only compromise is the one always present in the confluence of two genres. Indeed, for Jack Sage («La música..., p. 191), *Celos* is a mythological drama full of intelligence and pathos; it is, as a libretto, admirably appropriate. The same can be said for *Púrpura*. In conclusion, these two works of Calderón are interesting as *comedias*, as *comedias de música* (along with such other well-studied plays as *Eco y Narciso* and *La estatua de Prometeo*), and as operatic librettos. Indeed, because of their character as both *comedia* and libretto, they deserve much more study than they have received in the past.

#### NOTAS

1. For discussions concerning the dates of these plays, see Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Historia de la zarzuela, o sea, el drama lírico en España desde su origen a fines del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos, 1934), pp. 52, 54-55, and José Subirá, *Celos aun del aire matan: Opera del siglo XVII* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1933), pp. xiv-xvii.

2. The actors for *Celos* were listed in the 1662 edition of *Comedias nuevas escogidas de los mejores ingenios de España* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1663), XIX, 194, and have been reprinted several times, including Subirá, *Celos*, p. xvi. For further information about the actors and the actresses, see J.E. Varey and N.D. Shergold, eds., «Introducción» to Juan Vélez de Guevara, *Los celos hacen estrellas* (London: Tamesis, 1970), pp. lxxxviii-xcii, and H.A. Rennert, «Spanish Actors and Actresses between 1560 and 1680,» *Revue Hispanique*, 16 (1907), 334-538.

3. The theme of *omnia vincit amor* was a preferred one in the zarzuelas of the Golden Age. See Jack Sage, «La música de Juan Hidalgo,» in Vélez de Guevara, pp. 171-73.

4. *Celos*, I, 55, 325-36, 499; *Púrpura*, p. 17, mm. 424-26. All references to *Celos* are from my edition and refer to (San Antonio: Trinity Univ. Press, 1981), act and line number; all references to *Púrpura* are to the edition by Robert Stevenson (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1976), and include both page and measure numbers.

5. Based on the manuscript in the Biblioteca Pública de Evora, Portugal (catalog number CL1/2-1).
6. For a discussion of Torrejón's music, see Stevenson, pp. 43-51.
7. José Subirá, «Calderón de la Barca, libretista de ópera: Consideraciones literario-musicales,» *Anuario Musical*, 20 (1965), 69.
8. Subirá, «Calderón,» p. 68; Jack Sage, «Nouvelles lumières sur la genèse de l'opéra et la zarzuela en Espagne,» *Baroque*, 5 (1972), 108.
9. Sage, «Nouvelles,» pp. 110, 114.
10. Sage, «Function,» p. 224; Sage, «Nouvelles,» p. 200. For a further discussion of correlative poetry in Calderón, see Dámaso Alonso and Carlos Bousoño, *Seis calas en la expresión literaria española (Madrid: Gredos, 1963)*, pp. 109-75.
11. Sage, «Function,» pp. 218-19, 225-26; W.G. Chapman, «Las comedias mitológicas de Calderón,» *Revista de Literatura*, 5 (1954), 58.
12. Sage («La música,» p. 200) speculates that the widespread use of the refrains may be a holdover from the sixteenth-century villancico tradition, or it may reflect the Iberian preference for dance rhythms as the basis even for art music.
13. Compare the versification schemes of Juan Vélez de Guevara's *Los celos hacen estrellas*, ed. cit., pp. cxiv-cxvii, and Calderón's *El Laurel de Apolo* in Everett Hesse, «The Two Versions of Calderón's *El Laurel de Apolo*,» *Hispanic Review*, 14 (1946), 217-18.
14. Concerning the villancico as musical and poetic form, see Antonio Sánchez Romeralo, *El villancico: Estudios sobre la lírica popular en los siglos XV y XVI* (Madrid: Gredos, 1979), and Isabel Pope, «The Musical Development and Form of the Spanish Villancico,» in *Papers of the American Musicological Society, 1940* (Washington: American Musicological Society, 1946), pp. 11-17.
15. Cf. Subirá, «Calderón,» p. 70.
16. Stevenson, p. 24. E.M. Wilson, «The Text of Calderón's *La púrpura de la rosa*,» *MLR*, 54 (1959), 161, mentions that *Púrpura* also contains whole lines by Cervantes and Lope as well as by Góngora.
17. *Estudios y discursos de crítica histórica y literaria*, ed. Enrique Sánchez Reyes (Santander: Aldus, 1941), III, 269-87. Cf. Subirá, «Calderón,» p. 73.
18. «Courtly Allusions in the Plays of Calderón,» *PMLA*, 65 (1950), 548-9.