

Stefano Muneroni, PhD
Assistant Professor
MA Drama Program Coordinator
Dept. of Drama – University of Alberta (Canada)
stefano.muneroni@ualberta.ca
780-492.8734

Monarchical Authority and Jesuitism in Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona*

Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona* recounts the conversion to Catholicism of Visigoth prince Hermenegildo and his rebellion against his father Leovigildo over the heretical Arian belief. This was a popular theatrical trope that had originated in the late 1500s in the Jesuit college theatre. This paper sheds light on the connection the Lopean play keeps with its original source and explore the playwright's idea about secular power. As the story deals with the dawning of Catholicism as the national religion in the Iberian Peninsula, it provided the unique opportunity to commemorate a foundational moment in Spanish history and honor the individual that secured religious unity. The martyrdom of Hermenegildo also offered Lope numerous opportunities to link Hermenegildo's opposition to religious deviance with Philip III and Margaret's defense of the purity of the Catholic doctrine, reinforced with their expulsion of the Moors in 1609. Lope bridges the polarization between monarchical and papal authorities created by the Jesuit *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* by proposing a less polarized vision of the world and deploying the structural elements of the Spanish *comedia*. For Lope the crown has meaning only when it is connected to Catholicism. He does not dwell on the opposition between Pope and King, instead he concentrates on the encomiastic portrayal of the Spanish royal family and their Catholicism. Moreover, the play does not espouse the idea that Leovigildo is a tyrant, nor does it suggest that the king should be deposed because he is a heretic. *La mayor corona* avoids altogether the topics of tyrannicide and regicide which are paramount in the Jesuit *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*.

During the Golden Age religion and theatre come together to shape a communal vision of the world, *La mayor corona* provides the historian with an opportunity to scrutinize the modalities through which Hermenegildo, as a Jesuit trope, transfers and mutates once the commercial theatre appropriates its narrative.

Stefano Muneroni is assistant professor of Intercultural Theatre in the Department of Drama of the University of Alberta, in Canada. Dr. Muneroni is a theatre historian, dramaturg and translator who has taught in Italy, England, the U.S., and Canada. His areas of specialization are border theory and religious theatre. He was awarded research grants to conduct research in Honduras, Argentina, and Mexico, and received the Andrew Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship for 2007-2008. He is currently working on a book project about Jesuit theatre of the 1600s.