



The Play of Allegory in the Autos Sacramentales of Pedro Calderon de La Barca (Contexts & Literature)

Barbara E. Kurtz

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Spanish dramatist Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600-1781) was one of the most brilliant (although largely unheralded) writers in the history of European allegory. This work examines the playwright's allegorical drama as well as his theory of allegory. Calderon's allegorical drama consists of over 70 so-called "autos sacramentales". The "auto" was a one-act drama, usually in the form of personification allegory, that was intended for performance at the festivities held annually in connection with the Feast of Corpus Christi in celebration of the Eucharist. Calderon was the most popularly successful dramatist of the genre, and scholars almost universally consider him to be the most artistically sophisticated and inventive of "auto" playwrights. Unlike other theoreticians of allegory, Calderon left no sustained piece of writing on his chosen subject. What he did leave, however, was discussion of allegory scattered throughout the "autos": the dramas' personified characters pause frequently in the very midst of the action to speak learnedly about the definitions, nature, and importance of allegory. By analyzing and synthesizing these remarks, Barbara E. Kurtz reconstructs Calderon's theory of allegory. This volume should prove invaluable to scholars of Spanish literature and to students of allegory in general.

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