

José de Cañizares.  
*Las amazonas de España /  
 La hazaña mayor de Alcides.*  
 Estudio y edición de  
 Ignacio López Alemany.

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**LITERARY SCHOLARS HAVE DEDICATED** less attention to early eighteenth-century Spain than it deserves given the changes in dynasty, in domestic and international politics, and in literary and artistic tastes that characterize the period. Ignacio López Alemany's excellent critical edition of two libretti by José de Cañizares (1676–1750) is an important step towards remedying this lacuna. As he notes in the introduction, scholars of this period need editions that include not only extraliterary aspects but also the political, economic, and social conditions in which the works were composed: “son contextos que determinan y coproducen el mensaje” (16). Thanks to his experiences in the archival study of court theater (Ignacio López Alemany and J. E. Varey, *El teatro palaciego en Madrid: 1707–1724. Estudio y documentos*, Tamesis, 2006), the fruits of his labor yield unusual and detailed insight into the context and particulars of production.

The performances of the works edited here were occasional—that is, they were written, composed, and produced to celebrate auspicious occasions. *Las amazonas de España* honored the birth of Felipe, the third child of King Felipe V and Isabel de Farnesio. The performance in the Coliseo del Buen Retiro was modeled on the celebrations of the birth of Baltasar Carlos in 1629, thus maintaining a continuity “que apenas mostraba ninguna variante en la visualización de los poderes y enlazando los modos de la dinastía Austria con los de la dinastía Borbón sin solución de continuidad durante casi cien años” (62). *La hazaña mayor de Alcides*, performed to celebrate the engagement in 1723 of the Infante Don Carlos to the second daughter of the French regent, princess Felipa Isabel de Borbón-Orleans, conveyed a message of concord between France and Spain, pointing to a new era of peace (70).

Both works indicate the importance of the queen in maintaining this relationship. Irrespective of her national origin, Isabel de Farnesio, Felipe V's second wife, established a new model of royal consort, traditionally relegated to a secondary position. She became so influential that any diplomat or member of the court needed her favor to guarantee a successful outcome to his petitions. She controlled the king and the court through her charms and his sexual needs. When Felipe's increasingly severe depressions left him unable to handle affairs, Isabel took over. The Spanish courtiers criticized her, accusing her of enslaving the king, promoting Italians, and even trying to murder her stepsons. What she really wanted was to secure the Spanish presence in the Italian states and thereby secure thrones in Italy for her own sons. López Alemany dedicates several pages of the introduction (29–39) to the arrival of Isabel de Farnesio and her influence on the theater of the court. He maintains that she was not responsible for the “giro italiano” in Spanish politics; instead, the “giro” was a symptom of an interest that already existed (29). Nevertheless, the increased number and influence of Italians in the court following the marriage resonated undeniably.

The texts edited here represent a new genre consisting of Spanish dramatic works set to Italian music, referred to variously as *drama musical*, *drama músico*, or *ópera*. While the libretti were printed, often as luxury “souvenir” editions, the same care was not always taken with the musical scores, considered “documentos de trabajo”; in this case, they were evidently not conserved (17). The new subgenre represented by *Amazonas* (1720) and *Alcides* (1723) sought to combine the “esquema musical y espectacular de la ópera italiana” with the main characteristics of the “comedia barroca de tipo mitológico” (34). The collaboration between Spanish playwrights and Italian composers yielded a successful (if short-lived) formula. According to López Alemany, we see evidence of the queen's influence in the choice and nature of works selected for performance at the court. Between 1720 and 1724, we find the same basic plot: “un héroe de gran fuerza física y poderío militar es derrotado o reducido por una mujer, una reina, gracias a su astucia. Esta victoria sobre su rival, no obstante, no trae humillación sobre nadie, sino la paz entre las dos naciones y, tal y como era habitual en el teatro de la época, un final feliz en forma de matrimonio para todos los personajes implicados en la trama” (35).

López Alemany bases his critical edition on printed versions made to distribute to members of the audience: one of 515 copies of *Las Amazonas de España* printed in 1720, now in the Biblioteca Nacional de España (signature T-14941), and one of 625 copies of *La hazaña mayor de Alcides* printed in 1723, from the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (8-BL-8390). For *Hazaña*, he also uses a manuscript copy held in the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Mss.15599). The French copy seems to have been unknown to scholars until now, probably due to errors in cataloguing it as having been from the pen of Francisco Antonio de Salcedo (83). Corrections found in the manuscript that made their way into the printed versions suggest haste in the printing, corroborated by comments in the payment receipts. However, not all corrections made their way into print, and López Alemany indicates “variantes, correcciones, omisiones y añadidos que se encuentran en el manuscrito” (84). Although the “Intermedio” found in the

printed text is not the same as the “Sainete” that appears in the manuscript and that evidently was performed, López Alemany edits both, with explanatory notes.

López Alemany has attempted to make the texts as clear and accessible as possible, adhering to what are considered the “best practices” of scholarly editing for the field. This includes careful editing and judicious modernization of spelling and punctuation, with notes that clarify not only lexical and syntactical issues, but also literary and historical references. In the case of *Alcides*, textual variants are included in footnotes rather than in an appendix. Of great interest to scholars of performance, stage directions found in the manuscript of *Alcides* are included, although it would have been helpful to reproduce an image of these notations so that they could be compared to marks and directions of prompters’ copies of other plays performed in the same period.

The volume’s organization is a boon to the reader. Beginning with a general introduction, López Alemany provides a history of the genre in the context of the queen’s influence in the court in the period under study (1720–24), as well as the particular occasions that gave rise to the commissioning of the royal performances (birth, marriage). He reminds the reader of the Bourbon court’s connections to France by birth and to Italy by marriage. The specific period coinciding with the premiere performances of the works edited (1720 and 1723, respectively) represents the height of Isabel de Farnesio’s influence at court, not only in politics and statecraft, but also in the arts, in this case, in theater and music. This is followed by a brief biography of José de Cañizares and a discussion of the acting companies involved in the performances.

López Alemany then delves into the individual works, explaining the myths upon which they are based, the circumstances of the performances, and their context within the political concerns of the day. Most welcome is information on staging, in particular scenography and machinery, and, in the case of *Alcides*, related to the intermedio and the sainetes that accompanied the work. The general introductory materials conclude with a helpful bibliography of sources. Preceding the edited texts are a synopsis of the plot, a list of scenes, and—where available and relevant—a list of characters and the actors playing them.

These excellent editions of two libretti by José de Cañizares, the result of extensive research and accumulated expertise, accomplish precisely what the editor proposed to do. Let us hope that Ignacio López Alemany will continue this important work, allowing scholars to approach and appreciate early eighteenth-century Spanish dramatic literature within its political, social, and artistic contexts.

