CHAPTER NINE

NEO-LATIN DRAMA IN SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND LATIN AMERICA

Joaquín Pascual Barea

INTRODUCTION

In the Hispanic Neo-Latin theatre, ancient drama converged with cultured and popular medieval genres such as elegiac comedy, debates and religious performances, as well as humanistic comedy from Italy and from the Low Countries, and other dramatic, poetic and oratorical genres from the Modern Age. Before offering a historical survey, we shall also analyse the influence of Aristotle’s and Horace’s poetics and of ancient drama on Neo-Latin drama, paying particular attention to the structure, the number of acts, the characters, the use of prose or verse, and the main dramatic genres.

The history of Neo-Latin drama in Iberia and Latin America has been divided into four periods. During the reign of the Catholic Kings (1479–1516), the first Latin eclogues and dialogues produced in Spain, and the works of Hercules Florus and Johannes Parthenius de Tovar in the Kingdom of Aragon deserve our interest.

Under the King and Emperor Charles (1516–1556), we consider the main authors of Neo-Latin drama: Joannes Angelus Gonsalves and Joannes Baptista Agnesius in Valencia, and Franciscus Satorres in Catalonia; Joannes Maldonatus in Salamanca and Burgos; Joannes Petreius at the University of Alcalá de Henares, and Franciscus Cervantes de Salazar in Mexico, as well as Didacus Tevius in Portugal under John III (1521–1557).

A few months before the reign of King Sebastian in Portugal and King Philip in Spain (1556–1598), the Society of Jesus started their dramatic activity in the different provinces of Iberia: Portugal, Andalusia, Castile, Toledo and Aragon. We shall study the peculiarities of each province: the dramas of Michael Venegas, Ludovicus Crucius, Petrus Paulus Acevedus,

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Joannes Bonifacius and other Jesuits; the conflict between the Society and the humanists and dramatists Joannes de Mallara in Sevilla, Tevius in Lisbon, Franciscus Sanctius Brocensis in Salamanca, Joannes Laurentius Palmyrenus in Valencia, and Jacobus Romagnanus in Palma de Mallorca; Bernardinus Llanos’ eclogues and Joannes Cigorondo’s tragedy in Mexico; the pieces of a few professors of the University of Barcelona from 1571 to 1575; and other works. We shall then consider Neo-Latin theatre as a practice of language learning; the ideological, religious and political motivations of Jesuit theatre; its biblical and other religious themes; the female and other real and mythological characters or allegorical representations appearing in Jesuit school dramas; the occasions for the performances and the scenic art of these plays. During the last decades of the 16th century, vernacular languages became increasingly relevant, and other registers of Latin were also used along with other ancient and modern languages to describe a character.

In the 17th century, scholarly dramas are usually largely written in the vernacular, like Michael Henriquez’s *Iosephea* in Lleida, Antonius de Sousa’s *Real Tragicomedia* and *Dom Affonso* in Lisbon, and other pieces that are also described in this chapter. Neo-Latin eclogues enjoyed greater success than classical dramatic genres, particularly in Portugal, and the subgenre of funeral eclogue was also staged at the University of Salamanca. Finally, we will consider how Spanish and Portuguese dramas show the influence of Neo-Latin theatre, since their authors had studied in Jesuit schools.

The list of works for further reading is followed by two appendices on the main studies and editions, and on the pieces still needing to be edited and studied.

**The Influences of Ancient, Medieval and Modern Dramas**

*The Influence of Ancient Drama*

The obscenities and archaisms in Plautus’s comedies led to them being read and imitated less often than works by Terence who, thanks to his moral judgements, was always preferred for the purpose of educating young people. Spanish libraries preserve twice the number of manuscripts by Terence than Plautus and other ancient dramatists. Printed works tended to come from abroad, but there were also Spanish incunabula of Terence’s comedies with Donatus’s and Joannes Calphurnius’s commentaries (Barcelona, 1498), and about twelve sixteenth-century Iberian editions of these comedies, which reached Peru before 1542. Plautus’s twenty