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## **Abstract**

Emboldened by their success in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Nationalist ideologues sought to revitalize the stagnant Spanish theater and promote values associated with the newly formed authoritarian regime. The memory and restaging of seventeenth-century comedias became a crucial part of this project that focused particularly on Lope de Vega's Fuente Ovejuna, a history play that dramatizes a village's fifteenth-century rebellion against a tyrannical overlord. The definitive performance of Fuente Ovejuna during the early years of Franco's dictatorship, a production directed by Cayetano Luca de Tena at the Teatro Español in 1944, represented the culmination of the right's struggle to regenerate the theater. By adopting a fascist aesthetic and reinforcing the regime's political legitimacy through history, Luca de Tena's production captured its contemporary moment and signaled a possible solution to the theatrical crisis, one that blended historiography, aesthetics, and politics.

## **Keywords**

Lope de Vega, Fuente Ovejuna, Cayetano Luca de Tena, fascist aesthetics

## **Disciplines**

Dramatic Literature, Criticism and Theory | Latina/o Studies | Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature | Theatre History



DICTATING AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL  
LEGITIMACY THROUGH GOLDEN AGE  
THEATER: *FUENTE OVEJUNA* AT THE TEATRO  
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TENA (1944)

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**ABSTRACT** Emboldened by their success in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Nationalist ideologues sought to revitalize the stagnant Spanish theater and promote values associated with the newly formed authoritarian regime. The memory and restaging of seventeenth-century *comedias* became a crucial part of this project that focused particularly on Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*, a history play that dramatizes a village's fifteenth-century rebellion against a tyrannical overlord. The definitive performance of *Fuente Ovejuna* during the early years of Franco's dictatorship, a production directed by Cayetano Luca de Tena at the Teatro Español in 1944, represented the culmination of the right's struggle to regenerate the theater. By adopting a fascist aesthetic and reinforcing the regime's political legitimacy through history, Luca de Tena's production captured its contemporary moment and signaled a possible solution to the theatrical crisis, one that blended historiography, aesthetics, and politics.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Spanish theater was experiencing a decline. Critics, directors, and actors lamented the deteriorating state of their contemporary stage, beset with a number of problems that threatened to overwhelm the genre, such as the popularity of motion pictures, poorly

organized acting companies, and stagnant playwrighting.<sup>1</sup> Others compared the state of theater to the country's moral and political situation, indicating that the theatrical crisis reflected society's larger fragmentations that ultimately had led to the Spanish Civil War. While writers, directors, and actors offered different plans on how to rejuvenate the theater, the majority argued for a revival of plays written during Spain's Golden Age of literature. Vocal critics hailed the work of playwrights like Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca as a failsafe remedy to the genre's current shortcomings. Classical Spanish theater existed in the collective national memory as traditional works of art that encapsulated Spain's past and promised a bright future, both aesthetically and patriotically. As theater critic Alejandro Miquis proclaimed, "[N]uestro gran teatro es uno de los tesoros nacionales que hemos dejado perder neciamente; en él, sin embargo, estaba, más que en ninguna otra parte, el espíritu de la raza" (43).

As one of the most consistently staged and attended plays during this period, *Fuente Ovejuna*, Lope de Vega's dramatization of the collective murder of an abusive overlord, functioned as a central cog in the machinery of theatrical renovation. This aesthetic engagement with the past had obvious ideological overtones as well; the play was heavily politicized during the years surrounding the Civil War, with both the Nationalists and the Republicans staking claim to the "true" meaning of Lope's play, and by extension, the fate of Spain.<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, I will argue that in addition to supporting a totalitarian ideology, the first official production of *Fuente Ovejuna* during the Francoist dictatorship was aesthetically invested in an attempt to define and direct the future of Spanish theater. The performance also fit within a larger trend that argued for the rehabilitation of Lope's play as integral to the cultural and political future of Spain. By fully engaging with the memory of the play and the events it depicted, director Cayetano Luca de Tena sought to distinguish his production from previous adaptations. Duncan Wheeler, one of the few scholars to treat Luca de Tena's production at any length, argues that it had "a blatant fascist subtext" (85). I find that in addition to supporting the

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1. For more on the perceived crisis and its roots, see Vance Holloway (137–45) and John London (*Reception and Renewal in Modern Spanish Theatre* 3–4).

2. Critics have identified the shifting ideologies in early twentieth-century productions and considerations of *Fuente Ovejuna*. See, for example, Enrique García Santo-Tomás (331–62) and Wheeler (77–88).

regime, this production molds its fascist underpinnings into an aesthetic model in order to rejuvenate the ailing theater, a goal that worked alongside Franco's project of reforming Spain and seeking legitimacy through history. Luca de Tena's production thus captured its contemporary moment and signaled a possible solution to the theatrical crisis by blending historiography, aesthetics, and politics.

As a history play, *Fuente Ovejuna* commemorates Spain's past. Its effectiveness as a cultural and political tool relies precisely on its role as an event of remembering. According to French historian Pierre Nora, in the modern age official histories have replaced societal engagements with the past and corralled memory to the enclosed space of private thought. Nora, however, has identified the remaining traces of collective memory in what he terms *lieux de mémoire*, which are "fundamentally vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it" (5). The *lieux de mémoire* are material, symbolic, and functional creations that allow a society to represent the past as a site of collective remembrance; they can be statues, plaques, or even histories. I consider Lope de Vega's play *Fuente Ovejuna* to be a *lieu de mémoire*, a theatrical work that allowed Spanish society to remember the past in a communal format. Like Nora, I am less interested in the ostensible truth of "what really happened," and more concerned with how the dictatorship remembered and construed the events depicted in the play. *Fuente Ovejuna* dramatizes events that occurred in 1476, but its performance tradition and Lope de Vega's prestige extend the scope of memory and society's engagement with the play beyond the confines of the village's history. In other words, the play *Fuente Ovejuna* exists as a historical relic in and of itself, broadening an engagement with national memory at various levels. With the fate of Spain and its dramatic arts in the balance, theater practitioners and political ideologues invested time, energy, and arguments into properly remembering Lope's play. Their communion with *Fuente Ovejuna* as a *lieu de mémoire* understood and emphasized the play as a uniting factor common to all Spaniards, a history play with the power to diagnose ailments and produce a cure for Spain's future.

Describing a popular revolt that occurred while the Catholic Monarchs were in the process of consolidating their power, *Fuente Ovejuna* presents contentious actions and has become a contentious play. After centuries of languishing on shelves, the play only began to receive critical attention at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries when

Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo labeled it as one of the most democratic plays written during Spain's Golden Age. Menéndez y Pelayo's reading found many proponents, as well as detractors, and the arguments against considering *Fuente Ovejuna* as an expression of democratic action eventually coalesced in Ángel del Río's treatment of the play in 1948 (Larson 271–79). At the core of these two main critical tendencies is the opaque nature of the king's decision at the end of the play: does he pardon the villagers because he believes their crime was ultimately justified, or does he cave in to the pressures of popular sovereignty? As William R. Blue points out, "The play, of course, makes no attempt to settle the debate. In fact, *Fuente Ovejuna* ends with a 'resolution' that is a postponement or deferral of a resolution thereby raising more questions than it answers" (296).

This hermeneutical malleability drove the play's popularity in the years surrounding the Spanish Civil War. During the Republican period of the 1930s, several Spanish theater groups staged *Fuente Ovejuna*. Their performances emphasized the collective overthrow of tyranny and minimized the role of the Catholic Monarchs. Such productions followed a performance trend that had begun in nineteenth-century Russian adaptations of *Fuente Ovejuna*, which had emphasized themes of revolution and popular sovereignty (Weiner 218–23). In Spain, Enrique López Alarcón and Cipriano Rivas Cherif prepared versions of the play that echoed the revolutionary fervor of Russian adaptations staged during the early Soviet period. In fact, López Alarcón effectively erased all memory of the Catholic Monarchs from the play, incorporating lines of popular sovereignty in place of those that mention the royal couple; for example, he substituted *leyes* for *reyes* and *solo el pueblo* for *el rey solo* (Dougherty 132–33).

These productions followed the Second Republic's plan to instill democratic ideals and culture in the populace via an engagement with art. Sandie Holguín finds that

[t]heater represented the highest art form for most Spanish intellectuals whether they were anarchists, Republicans, Socialists, or conservatives, for Spain had a rich theatrical tradition that reached its pinnacle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. More important, they all saw theater as a didactic art form, and many intellectuals believed that restaging old theatrical performances could unite communities that industrialization had rent asunder. (11)

Politicians and policy-makers, regardless of their ideological identification, considered theater to be a powerful tool for mass indoctrination. Among the Second Republic's projects to spread culture and political engagement through theater was La Barraca, the touring university troupe led by Federico García Lorca, whose production of *Fuente Ovejuna* portrayed a universalizing ode to democracy, empowered people, and love. Another common theme uniting Republican productions of *Fuente Ovejuna* was an insistence on the concept of the law in lieu of the monarchy, as Jason Parker has argued: "Republican interpretations tend to focus more on the issues of class conflict and legality" (129).

In the atmosphere of combative ideologies of the 1930s, the right settled on *Fuente Ovejuna* as a prime example of the left's supposed damaging influence on theater and on Spanish history in general. In the press, journalists sympathetic to the Nationalist cause rallied against purported misrepresentations of Lope's play. In 1939, Luis Araujo Costa argued that "[l]os rojos, y aun los más templados republicanos demócratas, han solido presentar la comedia de Lope, *Fuenteovejuna*, como una producción teatral revolucionaria, en la que se desatan las pasiones del pueblo contra quienes ejercen la autoridad" ("El caso de 'Fuenteovejuna'" 3). If the supporters of the Second Republic and its democratizing mission were in a hurry to forget or downplay the role of the Catholic Monarchs, the Nationalists saw it as their duty to reinstate Ferdinand and Isabel as the play's unifying authoritarian figures: "*Fuenteovejuna* es, por tanto, un reflejo de aquel despertar de España, siempre hacia Dios por los cauces de la Monarquía y de la autoridad robusta" (3).<sup>3</sup> Araujo Costa thus rehabilitates the Catholic Monarchs' role in order to correct the ostensible Republican misinterpretation of the text and the historical moment it dramatizes. Such a reading emphasizes the play's closing lines that applaud the king's actions: "Su Majestad habla, en fin, / como quien tanto ha acertado" (vv. 2453–54). With this ideologically realigned exegesis, directors and acting companies could take the next step in performing a *Fuente Ovejuna* that satisfied Nationalist desires for strong, conservative leaders to guide Spain to greatness.

While this posturing helped to solidify the interpretation of *Fuente Ovejuna* that would inform Luca de Tena's 1944 production, the right's theater

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3. The insistence on restoring the Catholic Monarchs to the play, while initially appealing to the monarchist factions in the conservative coalition, ultimately would become ironic, given that Franco ruled as regent for life, even though the Bourbon monarchy was living in exile.

activity had already begun during the Civil War. Reviewing a somewhat spontaneous university production of *Fuente Ovejuna* during the Christmas holiday of 1938, José María Pemán hailed it as the birth of the new national theater. Pemán, the “poeta alférez” of the Nationalist cause (Villén 5), praised the amateur group, remarking that they had succeeded in creating “[u]n *Fuenteovejuna* navideño donde el teatro nacional nacía entre pajas humildes. Pero todo él surcado [sic] por una enorme racha de decisión, de valor. Se ha representado *Fuenteovejuna* como se asalta una trinchera” (3). Given that Spain was still mired in civil war, Pemán’s military metaphors were fitting, especially considering his view of the play: “Representar *Fuenteovejuna* es un poco como ganarle una posición al enemigo” (3–4). The Nationalist production restored Lope’s values to those considered correct by Pemán: “*Fuenteovejuna* es un drama de Estado fuerte y Nación vigorosa; de Rey y de Pueblo: o si quieres ‘nacional’ y ‘sindicalista’. Con esos dos elementos se ha hecho la Historia de España. Todas las audacias populares —aun las que entusiasman en la Rusia roja— son posibles cuando, en la última escena sale, a recogerlas, el Rey” (4). In Pemán’s argument, the king as an authority figure with absolute power had been the missing piece of Lope’s play in Republican productions. The impetus of the village’s popular revolt carries it into the arms of the dominant, authoritarian figure, highlighting the villagers’ battle cry in the play, “¡Fuente Ovejuna! ¡Viva el Rey Fernando! / ¡Mueran malos cristianos y traidores!” (vv. 1884–85).

In the minds of many in the Nationalist camp, including Pemán, the play symbolized the military’s revolt against leftist tyranny. Elena García Martín has observed that in Pemán’s review of the holiday performance, he equates not only the content but also the production itself with conservative ideals: “The performance is presented with carefully orchestrated rhetoric destined to associate the three pillars on which the Nationalist power is structured: military, culture, and religion” (20). *Fuente Ovejuna* had thus come to mirror “el gran drama nacional” (Pemán 7) that had swept Spain into bellicose conflict. To reconstruct the country, the Nationalists opened a culture front, focusing on *Fuente Ovejuna* as a microcosm of their struggle, and one that they wanted to be properly understood as a fight against tyranny and an effort to restore Spanish greatness. Such rhetoric was similar to Franco’s official position once in power; he presented himself as a champion who would restore Spain’s former glory and exalt the Catholic faith: “the 1940s saw an attempt at massive state intervention and control in the name of national renewal and a return to greatness” (Grugel and Rees 23).



In sharp contrast to the Second Republic's progressive vision of history evolving toward a democratic end, the Francoist regime viewed history through a mythic lens, whereby history followed a cyclical pattern and the regime represented a return to the prosperous age of Spanish imperial dominance. David K. Herzberger explains that "[t]he expulsion of the infidels is repeated in 1939, and the divination of Franco unfolds through the sacred circularity of myth" (35).<sup>4</sup> Simply put, Francoist Spain promised a return to the grandeur associated with the imperial Spain of the Catholic Monarchs and Charles V. Thus, instead of a typological conception of history, "one-directional and irreversible" (Frye 86), that views the past as evolutionary steps in Spain's forward progress, Francoism maintained an atemporality in which the future blossomed directly from the past. Framed in this manner, a return to traditional Spanish values, rooted in conservative Catholicism, became a logical step toward completing the mythic cycle. Unsurprisingly, the Nationalists presented their insurrection against the Second Republic as the "Cruzada," thereby invoking Spain's imperial expansion and religious wars against the infidels and pagans during the early modern period.

Once in power, the new regime considered history and culture as instrumental in achieving and maintaining power: "the State used the past both to underpin its existence as the fulfillment of Spain's historical destiny and to give moral legitimacy to its claims of authority in the present" (Herzberger 16). In addition to its reliance on mythic structures, Francoist historiography insisted on history as truth, limiting historical discourse to one indisputable official narrative. The recourse to history as the cypher that cracks *Fuente Ovejuna's* code, then, relied precisely on this narrative both to legitimize the right's reading and to draw a parallel with Francoist Spain: "[Lope] era español, y a fuer de tal, católico y monárquico, y su obra es un alegato en pro de la Monarquía y de la unidad nacional. Decir lo contrario por ignorancia o por mala fe, con el propósito de engañar a los incautos, supone desconocer en absoluto la historia de España" (Araujo Costa, "El caso" 3). The Francoist regime's rigidly structured historiography, locked into a putative truth-speaking function, thereby influenced readings of *Fuente Ovejuna*, readings that viewed the play not as a work of fiction but rather as a faithful, objective rendering of the historical event.

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4. Herzberger references Jo Labanyi's reading of Francoist historiography as a postapocalyptic return to the origins of Spain, a myth of stability and truth that connotes, in the words of Labanyi, a "'fall' into Paradise" (50).

The need to restore the “true” history to *Fuente Ovejuna* and to remember the play as a celebration of the Catholic Monarchs conditioned its first large-scale performance after the war. Directed by Luca de Tena and performed in the Teatro Español in Madrid, the official production was a political and commercial success, selling over 12,000 tickets, more than any other Golden Age play during the dictatorship. One of the production’s principal goals was to “rescatar del plano de servidumbre doctrinaria en que yacía, una de las obras más grandes y ejemplares de todo el teatro universal” (Program 1944, 3). Alfredo Marquerie, Spain’s most influential theater critic in the decades following the Civil War (Oliva 85), qualified Luca de Tena’s production as “la versión integral” and praised its wisdom in restoring “la entraña unitaria e imperial de este drama, que tan deformado y falseado había sido al suprimir sus escenas de virtud integradora, representada por los Reyes Católicos y sus símbolos de Unidad” (Marquerie 17). The production’s success and close ideological alignment with the regime led to its restaging in 1947 to coincide with Eva Perón’s visit to Spain. In the program to this second staging, *Fuente Ovejuna* is explicitly recognized as historical truth, “El suceso narrado por Lope ocurrió verdaderamente en abril de 1476” (Program 1947, 3).

When composing his play, Lope relied on chronicle sources detailing the uprising in the village of Fuente Ovejuna, but he also took liberties that blended history with fiction.<sup>5</sup> In effect, this was dramatic poetry’s goal, according to the literary theory of the early modern period: “Así que, los poemas que sobre historia toman su fundamento son como una tela cuya urdiembre es la historia, y la trama es la imitación y fábula. Este hilo de trama va con la historia tejiendo su tela, y es de tal modo, que el poeta puede tomar de la historia lo que se le antojare, y dejar lo que le pareciere” (López Pinciano 221). The program to the 1947 restaging disregards this role of dramatic poetry; “there was rarely any acknowledgement that Lope used fictional devices to tell a story based on an historical event rather than simply relaying facts; in other words, historical and poetic truths are assumed to be synonymous” (Wheeler 83). By treating the production as a pseudo history

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5. Drawing on an exhaustive investigation into the chronicles that detailed the two historical plotlines of *Fuente Ovejuna*, C. E. Anibal argued in 1934 that “Lope has willfully and purposely tampered with historical fact by making the villain of the Fuente Ovejuna episode likewise the villain of the Ciudad Real episode” (691).

lesson, the program establishes an interpretive frame for the viewer that associates the play's representation with unquestionable Francoist historiography. Such a rigid view, considering the play and its performance as a type of historical document, refuses interpretations that adapt the play to a specific political situation or modify the message to include plural and present concerns, a position as ironic as it is self-sustaining, since in addition to supporting the regime's atemporal, mythic historiography, the performance also alluded to the Spanish Civil War from the victors' perspective.

Moreover, the production also embodied new aesthetic trends in theater that rejected the liberal, social emphasis underscored by the Second Republic's roving theatrical troupes like La Barraca. Rightist theater critics and practitioners had long espoused an aesthetic that corresponded with their political and social views, and the 1944 production of *Fuente Ovejuna* represented the culmination of their battle for the past and for cultural production. In fact, as the Nationalists had neared their definitive victory in 1939, Araujo Costa envisioned the theater as a powerful tool for the Falangist right:

La Victoria de Franco ensancha tales horizontes con el sentimiento vivo de la Patria, que él ha salvado y en la actualidad, como en los años de los trágicos griegos. . . , cabe una enorme manifestación teatral de mucho aliento y espíritu, en la que se fundan, dentro de una misma comunión, el impulso hacia lo alto de la creencia y la veneración a España en sus tradiciones. (“¿Teatro de masas?” 3)

The new theater, for Araujo Costa, would be part of the Falangist project of reform and renovation, built upon tradition. Such a theater would exalt Spain and traditional Spanish values and operate closely with the new government to ensure a smooth transition and a prosperous state.

As Spain's fascist party, the Falange<sup>6</sup> promoted what Roger Griffin has termed a “palingenetic ultranationalism” (13); that is, the party endorsed a nationalism that was based on history steeped in myth in order to regenerate and revive the nation. Their ideas on theater were closely tied to their political beliefs. Griffin, writing on the theater in twentieth-century fascist Europe, asserts that “a truly fascist theatrical theory or practice will express itself in a

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6. Sultana Wahnón points out that “the Falange Española (FE) came close to being called *Fascismo Español* at the instigation of José Antonio Primo de Rivera himself” (192).

central preoccupation with the victory over decadence by youthful new forces and the resulting birth of a new national community made up of a new type of ‘man’” (21). Within the Spanish context, Ernesto Giménez Caballero cultivated this vision of the theater. Self-styled as the Spanish Goebbels,<sup>7</sup> Giménez Caballero was one of the leading voices clamoring for a Falangist aesthetic and “the major literary exponent of fascist thought in Spain” (Labanyi 36). In *Arte y estado* (1935), Giménez Caballero presented his theoretical and political understanding of the role of art, garbed in a messianic rhetoric. His vision promoted art to the role of a “*supremo arma de combate*” (*Arte y estado* 89; italics in original), and he emphasized the transcendental, mystical nature of theater as the solution to the theatrical crisis and the best possible accompaniment to the future fascist state. As part of his aesthetic project, he rejected the notion of art for art’s sake, and instead sought to promote art within its context, emphasizing that it must be exemplary, both morally and stylistically (Wahnón 196–97). He thus viewed theater as a reflection of the will and desire of the masses, unified under one banner and one leader: “fascists were to create a theatre that propagated the idea of a national community united under the yoke of a hero, who was to redeem the nation by converting it into a great imperialist power” (Wahnón 201).

As part of this project of national rejuvenation based on a return to historical greatness, Giménez Caballero and others underscored the need for theater to return to its Golden Age: “The Falange favoured the classical model of theatre, because apart from its allegorical or symbolic nature, it also contained a heroic dimension, it possessed a propagandistic function, and was accessible to all social classes” (Linares 216). Golden Age plays promoted values idealized by the Falange and the new regime: Catholicism and martial bravery. In fact, as Kessel Schwartz reasoned, “The Falangists found in him [Lope de Vega] their concept of the state, nation, and religion, and his *Fuenteovejuna* came to be a symbol of their ideology” (207). In addition to serving the regime’s ideological needs, the classics gave practitioners an opportunity to improve their craft. Golden Age plays served as a *teatro*

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7. Giménez Caballero had gone so far as to recommend himself for Goebbels’s equivalent cabinet position in the projected fascist state: “Yo os pido, fascistas de España, que seáis piadosos conmigo cuando triunfemos. ¡Dadme ese ministerio!” (*Arte y estado* 88). He did in fact achieve his goal, enjoying partial responsibility for Services of Press, Propaganda, and Radio during the first year of the war. He was soon replaced by Dionisio Ridruejo, who, ironically, came to be known as the Spanish Goebbels (Wahnón 194).

*ejemplar*, both ideologically and aesthetically, as Manuel Muñoz Carabantes notes: “*la reposición de los clásicos áureos se entendió como un acontecimiento cultural, como un acto de adoctrinamiento histórico, moral y político y, en ocasiones, como un banco de pruebas bien para montajes espectaculares, bien para tímidos intentos renovadores*” (61; emphasis in original). The classics presented an opportunity to break away from mainstream bourgeois theater; moreover, funneling new trends through Golden Age plays gave practitioners a pragmatic solution to circumvent, challenge, and experiment with the limitations imposed by mainstream tastes and expectations while still achieving commercial success. Between the years 1939 and 1950, 23 Golden Age plays were staged at the Teatro Español out of a total of 152 productions (Serrano Agulló 1339), a continued popularity that attested to the classics’ role in Spain’s postwar theatrical renovation.

The first director to assimilate these ideas for a fascist theater aesthetic in Spain at the national level was Felipe Lluch Garín. Before the war, Lluch had supported staging classic plays to reform contemporary Spanish theater, and after the Nationalist victory, he became a vocal advocate for a true nationalization that would place the theater wholly under state control and link it explicitly to official ideology. Regarding the situation in 1939, he lamented that “[e]l teatro español está agonizando. Desligado por completo de la gloriosa tarea de reconstrucción nacional que es hoy la vida de España, y olvidado en absoluto de la noble tradición religiosa y popular de nuestra escena, se va hundiendo lentamente, en un oscuro naufragio de rutina y mezquindad” (Lluch 117). Examining Lluch’s writings on the theater, Víctor García Ruiz finds that Lluch outlines a coherent theatrical philosophy “que podríamos considerar estrictamente y sin ambages, como un auténtico Teatro Fascista en España” (93). To revive the theater, Lluch gave it a mission that coincided with the goals of the dictatorship. He conceived of theater as a medium that could unite Spain under the Francoist state, and as such he considered that it “debe responder a una creación colectiva, a una conciencia nacional; es decir, a un concepto de Estado. Es preciso, pues, para salvar el teatro, crear otra vez un teatro nacional que sea reflejo exacto de nuestra vida actual, con escrupulosa fidelidad al destino histórico de nuestra patria. Es decir, un teatro para España y para su gesta heroica” (Lluch 117).

Where the grassroots movements during the Second Republic had failed to coalesce into a coherent national theater, Lluch and others succeeded in creating a unified product. Lluch was eventually named as director of Madrid’s Teatro Español, one of two national theaters along with the María

Guerrero; both had evolved directly from the Compañía de Teatro Nacional de FET y de las JONS (Oliva 93–94). In 1940, to celebrate the Francoist regime's one-year anniversary, he staged his first resounding success: *España, una, grande y libre*. Stylized as a Golden Age theatrical event, the production included a *loa* (*Loa famosa de la unidad de España*), a *comedia* (*Comedia heroica de la libertad de España*), and a *farsa* (*Fiesta alegórica de la grandeza de España*). It was hailed as both an artistic and propagandistic triumph and toured various capital cities of the Spanish provinces (Aguilera Sastre 342). By assimilating Golden Age forms to modern content, Lluch and his team hoped to link the memory of classic Spanish theater and the accompanying fanfare of empire with the newly reformed Spanish state. They thus balanced tradition with modernity, creating a continuity that sought to utilize the historicity of the classics as a springboard for modern theatrical accomplishments that followed Falangist ideology.

Lluch's protégé, Cayetano Luca de Tena, succeeded him as director in 1942. While Luca de Tena also believed in staging the classics as a traditional model that could be readily adapted to the state's ideological needs, during his tenure at the Teatro Español he was uniquely concerned with the functional renovation of theatrical practices. A trip in 1942 as a cultural observer of Nazi Germany's theaters had a profound influence on Luca de Tena's projects of theatrical reform, especially with regards to architecture, lighting, mechanics of stage design, and rigorous actor training. Reflecting on his trip, Luca de Tena marvelled at the innovative practices, asserting that "aquellos era como el tesoro de Alí-Babá para el curioso de la mecánica teatral" ("Ensayo general V" 30). At the helm of the Teatro Español, Luca de Tena realized many of his goals; he modernized lighting, brought in tailors specifically for his productions, created a shoe workshop, organized and classified the costume repository, and fought against the practice of seniority among actors, casting roles according to suitability rather than bowing to experience (Santa-Cruz 75). He was a key figure in defining the evolving role of the director during the decade of the 1940s, describing his particular style as "realismo simbólico, o realismo poético" (Baltés 195). In his first years at the Teatro Español, he directed several Golden Age *comedias* by Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, and Tirso de Molina, but the highlight of his early career was his rendition of *Fuente Ovejuna*, which thrilled critics and audiences alike and marked an evolution in his careful attention to the aesthetic properties of the new theater.

The 1944 staging of *Fuente Ovejuna* at the Teatro Español, then, "was

clearly a flagship production” (Wheeler 85) that combined Luca de Tena’s drive to modernize technical aspects of the theatrical experience with an unabashedly opulent celebration of the Francoist regime through the medium of a Golden Age play. The production included the first “decorado corpóreo” (Santa-Cruz 74) as Luca de Tena strove to build a complex realistic illusion through the careful manipulation of lights, music, stage design, and ambience. To heighten the emotional intensity of specific moments of the play, he hired the cinematic composer Manuel Parada, famous for his work on Franco’s *Raza* (1941), to furnish an original score. Luca de Tena also relied on the expertise of his set designer, Sigfrido Burmann. Born in Germany, Burmann had decided to make Spain his home after arriving in Cádiz on scholarship in 1913 and had worked in Spanish theaters from that time forward.<sup>8</sup>

Burmann’s working résumé boasted an intimate familiarity with *Fuente Ovejuna*; he had designed the set for Margarita Xirgu’s production in the spring of 1935, which coincidentally was also staged at the Teatro Español using a text prepared by Cipriano Rivas Cherif (brother-in-law to Manuel Azaña, second President of the Second Republic). Burmann’s design on that occasion consisted of a fixed arch, behind which the sets changed according to the scene: “Los ambientes fueron construidos a base de elementos arquitectónicos, ayudados con el juego de telones y cortinas” (C. Burmann 93). Contemporary press qualified the production as an “éxito clamoroso” (“Cartelera madrileña” 49). Burmann’s complicit participation in this leftist performance of *Fuente Ovejuna* that, like many others, minimized the role of the Catholic Monarchs would have raised more than a few eyebrows among those in the Francoist regime if not for the three years he spent in Nazi Germany (1936–1939) and his enthusiastic remarks about the positive presence of Spanish classics on the German stage: “en Alemania el autor dramático que en la temporada pasada ha tenido un número de estrenos mucho mayor que cualquier otro autor de teatro, se llama . . . ¡Lope de Vega!” (S. Burmann 17).<sup>9</sup>

8. For a complete account of Burmann’s personal and professional life, see his daughter Conchita Burmann’s *La escenografía teatral de Sigfrido Burmann*, which, by the author’s own admission, is heavily drawn from Ursula Beckers’s unpublished dissertation of the same name.

9. Regarding the Third Reich’s inclination toward early modern Spanish drama, London explains that “[a] period of history indelibly linked to Spanish national unity, imperial expansion and an anti-semitic Inquisition had obvious attractions for the Nazis” (“Non-German Drama” 229).

Just as Russian adaptations of *Fuente Ovejuna* had influenced Republican productions that shared a close ideological affinity with the Soviets, a German adaptation anticipated Luca de Tena's 1944 production. Entitled *Das brennende Dorf* (*The Burning Village*), the German adaptation departed significantly from the original but nevertheless became an instant success and useful piece of propaganda for the Nazis after its premier in 1935.<sup>10</sup> Several elements of the set may have inspired Burmann's 1944 design, including Spanish-style houses with clay barrel roof tiles flanking both sides of the stage, an impressive castle presiding over the village, and a backdrop featuring a tree in the center for the forest scenes. Additionally, Ernesto Giménez Caballero attended the premier of *Das brennende Dorf* in 1935 and delivered a short speech on its merits for the fascist movement, insisting that "Lope afirmaba el principio del caudillaje ('Führerprinzip') y que su obra *Fuenteovejuna* representaba a su vez 'el primer drama del socialismo nacional'" (Seliger 400). Playing to the crowd, Giménez Caballero refuted the idea that Lope de Vega and *Fuente Ovejuna* represented anything less than a resounding confirmation of the benefits of authoritarian power. In later considerations of the play, he repeated this view: "El pueblo contra los feudales . . . [y] a favor de un Absoluto Mando: de una Monarquía *total*" ("¡Fuenteovejuna, todos a una!" 6; italics in original).

Giménez Caballero would later prepare the script used by Luca de Tena in the 1944 production. In his version, Giménez Caballero strove to maintain the integrity of Lope's original text, limiting himself to small lexical changes where the meaning would not be clear to a twentieth-century spectator. In fact, the script was "a typed copy of Lope's play with minor changes indicated by handwritten amendments" (Wheeler 85). These changes included a modification to the final verses with a finale "al compás del 'Cara al sol'" (Baltés 171n152). In an interview, he described his adaptation in militant terms that echoed Nationalist rhetoric during the Civil War:

Mi propósito fué de tipo absolutamente español. Un propósito de "liberador", de soldado de Franco. Habíamos "liberado" a España en su territorio,

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10. The original translation was completed by Adolf Friedrich Schack in 1845, and Günter Haenel adapted this translation (without having read the original) for his 1935 performance in Hamburg. For more on the translation and performance, including a detailed study of the changes, see H. W. Seliger.



en sus gentes, en su destino histórico. Faltaban aún ciertos valores espirituales, entre ellos éste de Lope de Vega. Lope de Vega estaba aún metido en una “cheka”. Mi adaptación ha consistido, simplemente, en su rescate hispánico. (González-Aller 5)

Presenting himself as the savior of the play, Giménez Caballero compared his version to the other projects for Spain’s ideological and physical realignment. He draws an obvious parallel between art and ideology, one that extends to the aesthetic properties of the 1944 production.

Luca de Tena, guided by Giménez Caballero’s script and *Fuente Ovejuna*’s performance history both in Spain and abroad, emphasized the Catholic Monarchs as figures of absolute authority who upheld religion as central to their reign. In order to promote a vision of a clearly delineated social hierarchy, the production emphasized specific staging aspects: the social and economic distinction between nobles and villagers, the villagers’ collective action, and the governing equilibrium found in the Catholic Monarchs’ dispassionate justice. Period costuming served as a distinguishing feature of social rank; villagers dressed in rustic clothing while Ferdinand and Isabel wore intricate state regalia. Adding to the social division between villagers and nobles, a large bridge spanned the stage and created a vertical hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> The production thus succeeded in drawing a division between social classes, reinforcing the material conditions of each in their costumes and presenting Lope’s play so as to reinforce the hierarchies of ruling and ruled.

While the production clearly identifies social levels, it also reinforces the harmony within and between those levels. Luca de Tena worked closely with choreographers to give the group scenes, with as many as sixty actors and extras on stage at once, the necessary coherence to underscore the unity of the villagers’ behavior. He enlisted the help of the Ballet Teatro Lope de Rueda and its director Roberto Carpio for the choreographed wedding scene, in which numerous pairs of villagers performed synchronized movements in the style of a folkloric dance. For the mob scene where the villagers attack the Comendador, Luca de Tena supervised the extras to ensure they moved according to his vision: “En la sublevación de *Fuente Ovejuna*, por ejemplo,

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11. The bridge stood approximately three meters high and was supported by two fourteen-meter horizontal steel bars. It crossed the width of the stage with no visible supports, and its spectacular nature led some wits to refer to the production as “Puenteovejuna” (Beckers 211; C. Burmann 121–22).

dividí la intervención de los conjuntos en cuatro tiempos para facilitar el ensayo” (“Ensayo general III” 46). At the beginning of this scene, the actress playing Laurencia, Mercedes Prendes, delivered her postkidnap speech with rousing inflection to a group of men huddled on the ground with heads bent, looking forlorn and emasculated.<sup>12</sup> While in the original playtext Laurencia uses the disparaging term *maricones* to admonish the men, the 1944 production substitutes in its place *maritornes* to make sure it would not offend conservative Catholic sensibilities. In any case, the group of men huddled on the ground became a vengeful mob that swept over the stage and into the Comendador’s fortress. This scene’s choreography again emphasized unity; villagers as a group assaulted the Comendador and threw him from the bridge: “Fue una escena muy lograda y causó un impacto escalofriante entre el público seguido de un gran aplauso. Era el triunfo del pueblo sobre el poder, ingeniosamente conseguido” (C. Burmann 122).

Predictably, the scenes featuring the Catholic Monarchs received special attention. Their royal apartments in Medina del Campo highlighted the dictates of state and the formality of the receiving hall. Elaborately fashioned thrones occupied a raised platform on stage left, and the king and queen, seated, received the various emissaries. Surrounding the monarchs were “unos reposteros, un dosel y tres soldados distribuidos estratégicamente” (Luca de Tena, “Ensayo general III” 46). The soldiers, though few in number, contributed to the imposing aspects of the scene. Stationed on the bridge, which functioned in this scene as an upper gallery, the soldiers held shields and long upraised pikes. The overall effect channeled the regime’s reading of the play and emphasized state power overseeing and guiding popular sovereignty. In this production, the stress on unity encompassed the relationship between the village and the king and queen; together the villagers emphasized their loyalty to the Catholic Monarchs as the ultimate repository of the state: “Al final, los reyes presidían desde allí —es decir, desde el feudalismo que acababan de abolir simbólicamente— el abrazo del pueblo y la nobleza, que ya se unían en el plano inferior de la escena” (Luca de Tena, “Ensayo general III” 46). Luca de Tena’s production, then, followed the ideological precepts of the new government in creating a *lieu de mémoire* from Lope’s play, one that celebrated unity under authoritarianism.

Discussing the production, Luca de Tena also underscored the importance

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12. Part of her speech can be seen in *NO-DO número 1961B: Fuenteovejuna* (2:33–2:57).

of the set design: “Con sus ejes perpendiculares, que marcaban una cruz, aquellos elementos [el puente y la torre] querían significar la alta vigilancia del poder real, presente siempre en el conflicto” (“Ensayo general III” 46). The cross, formed by intersection of castle and bridge, aligned the production with the regime’s Catholic values. The Comendador’s costume, with the cross on his chest denoting his position as a knight of the Calatravan Order, echoed the religious symbolism found in the set design; however, his behavior undermined his ostensible faith. Instead, the cross became the exclusive symbol of the Catholic Monarchs, as is underscored in the play: “Católico Rey Fernando, / a quien el Cielo concede / la corona de Castilla” (vv. 1950–52). The purpose of the cross formed by tower and bridge, then, besides distinguishing between the false religiosity of the Comendador and the true faith of Ferdinand and Isabel, also gestured toward the Francoist regime’s insistence on Catholicism as the official religion of the Spanish state.

Moreover, Luca de Tena’s approach to incorporating Christian symbols in the staging of *Fuente Ovejuna* adheres to Giménez Caballero’s aesthetic models, a type of Christian classicism inspired by Golden Age art and Spain’s Catholic heritage. Giménez Caballero advocated for a patriotic aesthetic that fomented the image of a people united under the banner of the fatherland and religion: “El Arte de la vida sólo en eso consiste: en lograr pasar del estado de individuo a estado de patria, para alcanzar a través suyo el supremo estado eterno: de la paz y contemplación de Dios” (*Arte y estado* 246).

Another noteworthy aspect of Giménez Caballero’s theories on art that blended religion and the state was his affinity for el Escorial, Philip II’s sixteenth-century monastery dedicated to Saint Lawrence. Giménez Caballero envisioned the Habsburg palace as a symbol that fused the mighty Spanish empire’s grandeur and unity into a monolithic expression of state power: “Ahí está España con el símbolo de su *Estado supremo* alcanzado un día, unos años del siglo XVI: *El Escorial*. Estado hecho piedra, jeroglífico esfinge” (*Arte y estado* 233; italics in original). El Escorial, for Giménez Caballero, stood firm against liberal values imported by traitors to the Spanish nation. He fixated on its relationship to imperial Spain and underscored its importance as the model for his aesthetic that blended fascist ideology, architecture, and artistic innovation, anticipating its rediscovery and use by a new generation.

While Giménez Caballero argued for el Escorial as an emblematic model for the new state, in Luca de Tena’s production a different architectural symbol fulfilled a similar role. The Castillo de la Mota served as a visual

analogue of imperial authority and grounded the entire production in this new theatrical aesthetic. The Castillo de la Mota pervaded every aspect of the production, even the program's cover, which featured a drawing of the set with the castle in the background and silhouettes of soldiers (or villagers) flanking it on the bridge and lining the lower level. The castle's ubiquitous appearance in the background of the production underscored the permanence and centrality of the play's secondary plot, the rebellion of the Maestre and the Comendador against the Catholic Monarchs, which had been eliminated in some Republican productions. As the program states, "En la torre del Castillo de la Mota hemos personificado la majestad real, vigilante y presente a través de todo el desarrollo dramático" (Program 1944, 3).

Besides its picturesque qualities that made it a visually pleasing choice, the Castillo de la Mota also had a close connection to Ferdinand and Isabel, whose coat of arms graced its wall. During their struggle for the Castilian crown, the Catholic Monarchs took an interest in its strategic capacity. In 1475, Ferdinand and Isabel reclaimed the castle as their own from supporters of Joanna, Isabel's rival, and ordered it staffed with soldiers and equipped with artillery to guard the kingdom's safety and their right to rule.<sup>13</sup> Franco also took an interest in the castle and ordered it restored so that it could house part of the Sección Femenina. In May of 1939, the grounds surrounding the castle were the site of a tribute to Franco and his victorious army. The celebration was spearheaded by Pilar Primo de Rivera, leader of the Sección Femenina, and the press described the gala as a "[d]ía españolísimo, con himnos triunfales y banderas victoriosas, en un escenario lleno del alma inmortal de Isabel de España" (Losada de la Torre 8). By choosing the Castillo de la Mota to symbolize royal authority in his production of *Fuente Ovejuna*, then, Luca de Tena referenced both the Catholic Monarchs' history and the Francoist regime's efforts to restore the castle to its former glory, part of the larger project of returning Spain to its mythic, imperial history.

In addition to the history that made the Castle of la Mota an appropriate choice for Luca de Tena, geography played a role in its selection. Located in Medina del Campo, the castle recalls the dominance of Castile, Spain's central region, over the outlying provinces, alluding to the center-versus-periphery dynamic that pervades Spanish history. The set thus creates an

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13. For more on the Catholic Monarchs' use of the Castillo de la Mota, see Eufemio Lorenzo Sanz (243–47) and Fernando Cobos Guerra and José Javier Castro Fernández (211–34).

illusion of physical proximity, when in reality close to three hundred miles separate the Castillo de la Mota and the village of Fuente Ovejuna (located in Andalucía). In the same way that Lope collapsed two historical events, the villagers' rebellion and the battle for Ciudad Real, into supposedly contemporary actions for his dramatic needs, Luca de Tena's production overlapped two geographical areas to express the monarchy's ubiquity. This combination also reinforced Castile's hegemony over the other regions, as one perceptive reviewer observed: "Así el castillo de la Mota, alerta castellano preside simbólicamente el drama andaluz" ("Español: inauguración de la temporada: rescate escénica de 'Fuenteovejuna'" 4).

The castle, then, constantly reminds the villagers and the audience of the Crown's presence and power. It also reinforces the villagers' loyalty to their sovereigns, as they plead in the play:

Señor, tuyos ser queremos.  
 Rey nuestro eres natural,  
 y con título de tal  
 ya tus armas puesto habemos. (vv. 2437–40)

By extension, the governmental restructuring that occurred in the wake of Fuente Ovejuna's rebellion implicitly alludes to Franco's imposition of centralized rule during his dictatorship. The heightened awareness of Castile's centrality and presence in Luca de Tena's production followed the regime's lead; in the previous year (1943) the regime had celebrated in Burgos the anniversary of Castile's founding one thousand years prior. This large-scale commemorative event featured a spectacle of medieval games and speeches designed to "fijar un pasado que se proyectó al presente a través de un forzado paralelismo con el Caudillo" (Alares López 73).

As an addition to the original play, Luca de Tena staged the Comendador's failed battle against the royal army. Four pairs of soldiers locked blades on the bridge, and "recortados por los rayos de los proyectores, sobre un fondo oscuro, los soldados reales vencían a los de Calatrava en un combate a 'cámara lenta' y elevaban al cielo sus espadas victoriosas mientras se oía el diálogo del maestre y el comendador, invisibles para el público" (Luca de Tena, "Ensayo general III" 46). The director's careful attention to technical details emphasized the Catholic Monarchs' moment of triumph that prefigured the Comendador's downfall and ultimate death. However, given the

relationship that many right-wing critics had identified between *Fuente Ovejuna* and the Spanish Civil War, the soldiers also symbolized the Nationalist warriors who had been victorious in their “Cruzada” against the Republicans. It is important to note that this scene is narrated but not staged in the original play. Luca de Tena’s addition therefore epitomized the new theatrical aesthetic that praised the martial hero and the epic mode, but it also eerily signaled Francoism’s mythic historiography that channeled Ferdinand and Isabel and viewed the Nationalist’s 1939 victory as analogous to the Catholic Monarchs’ consolidation of power.

Luca de Tena’s 1944 production of *Fuente Ovejuna* at the Teatro Español was a political, commercial, historical, and artistic success in the eyes of the Francoist regime and its supporters. The production unified the villagers and their rulers against tyranny and the abuse of power, ostensibly correcting the history that had been obscured by previous adaptations. Luca de Tena’s version exemplified the fascist aesthetic that had gained momentum in the Spanish national theaters after the Francoist regime had taken power. With Ferdinand and Isabel back among the cast of characters, the production placed the authoritarian element in a prominent position and framed itself as a return to history:

En esta revisión de *Fuenteovejuna* se ha redimido a Lope del cautiverio comunista. Se ha recobrado el sentido español, católico, genuino, orgánico, tradicional, frente a los tiranos, escarnio de Reyes y leyes, y hombro a hombro con los españoles que, abiertos a la Patria y a la Historia, sienten el latir de la Historia en el porvenir de la patria. (Castro 3)

History and the memory of the play were costumed in fascist robes of state as the past became the future, and the future, the past; *Fuente Ovejuna* was the means to bridge them both.

Of course, the dictatorship was unable to maintain complete control over *Fuente Ovejuna*. The revolutionary rhetoric waned in the years following the regime’s consolidation of power, and the fascist Falange only held partial control over cultural affairs, sharing the command with the Ministry of Education, headed by traditional Catholics (Wahnón 206–08). Pockets of resistance formed and coalesced into more organized manifestations of opposition. Predictably, *Fuente Ovejuna* once again served as a play whose history, memory, and performance tradition made it the perfect stage for an engaging protest. In 1965, Alberto Castilla and a group of university students

performed a version of the play internationally in which the Catholic Monarchs were eliminated and *guardias civiles*, Spain's national policemen, shared the stage with Republican hymns (García Lorenzo 89–92). Although short-lived, the award-winning production continued the dialogue between memory, history, and contemporary politics, reaffirming the artistic and political utility of *Fuente Ovejuna* as a *lieu de mémoire*.

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