



# Monarchy, Political Culture, and Drama in Seventeenth-Century Madrid: Theater of Negotiation

*Jodi, Professor Campbell*

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In early modern Spain, theater reached the height of its popularity during the same decades in which Spanish monarchs were striving to consolidate their power. Jodi Campbell uses the dramatic production of seventeenth-century Madrid to understand how ordinary Spaniards perceived the political developments of this period.

Through a study of thirty-three plays by four of the most popular playwrights of Madrid (Pedro Caldern de la Barca, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, Juan de Matos Fragoso, and Juan Bautista Diamante), Campbell analyzes portrayals of kingship during what is traditionally considered to be the age of absolutism and highlights the differences between the image of kingship cultivated by the monarchy and that presented on Spanish stages. A surprising number of plays performed and published in Madrid in the seventeenth century, Campbell shows, featured themes about kingship: debates over the qualities that make a good king, tests of a king's abilities, and stories about the conflicts that could arise between the personal interests of a king and the best interest of his subjects. Rather than supporting the absolutist and centralizing policies of the monarchy, popular theater is shown here to favor the idea of reciprocal obligations between subjects and monarch.

This study contributes new evidence to the trend of recent scholarship that revises our views of early modern Spanish absolutism, arguing for the significance of the perspectives of ordinary people to the realm of politics.

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