

John Knox. 2016. *El primer toque de la trompeta contra el monstruoso gobierno de las mujeres*.
Edited by José Luis Martínez-Dueñas
and Rocío G. Sumillera
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Bibliography on John Knox, the Scottish Reformation, and the theological underpinnings of Presbyterianism has not been scarce in the last fifty years, with a wealth of articles, biographies, and book-length studies that have contextualized Knox's extensive production, as shown in David Laing's 1895 edition of Knox's works in six volumes or an illustrated *Life* by Thomas McCrie in 1814. Recent biographies (Percy 2013; Marshall 2008) are concerned with different episodes in Knox's life and his pastoral mission, while Jane Dawson's biography (2016) delves into unearthed correspondence between Knox and his friend Christopher Goodman during his "Frankfurt Troubles," the first textual discovery on Knox since 1875 that puts him, as Dawson suggests, in a more intimate and nuanced light. It might come as a surprise that one of Knox's more famous and controversial texts printed anonymously in his lifetime, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, does not have a stand-alone annotated edition in English. It has hit the commercial market, though, with the "The Knox Trilogy" fiction series by Marie Macpherson (2012), aptly entitled *The First Blast of the Trumpet* and its two sequels, *The Second* and *The Third* blasts.

Despite the deafening flurry of his words and deeds, Knox's theological contribution as a key figure in the Reformation is established on solid ground, but the character and mind-frame of Knox the man is still elusive. Texts such as *The First Blast* have hindered, as Dawson suggests, a multifaceted and accurate version of Knox since scholars have tended to correlate the antagonistic arguments against female rule in *The First Blast* with a general acrimony against women. Was Knox a lover or a hater of women?

How can we make sense of his intellectual respect and attachment to Anne Locke (1530–1590), the first woman to compose a sonnet sequence in English, with his arguments about women's natural inferiority in *The First Blast*? And perhaps more importantly, what repercussions do these apparent discrepancies between the discourse against women and the dealings with women have on the study of women's writing and social status in the context of the Reformation? These are questions that warrant a thorough analysis not only of Knox's biography, however brilliantly accomplished in Dawson's book, but an assessment of Knox's textuality inscribed within a Reform culture in the making, with the political, national and class tensions which he himself endured and provoked.

It is just timely that José Luis Martínez-Dueñas and Rocío Sumillera's translation and edition of *The First Blast* has been published with a brilliant introductory study that illuminates some of these critical areas in Knox studies. There are no translations of Knox's works into Spanish, an omission that can be traditionally explained by the political and religious animosity between radical reformist factions and Spanish Catholics, but that can no longer hold in a twenty-first century context despite the low incidence of Presbyterians in Spain (perhaps somewhat higher in a Latin American context).

The "Estudio preliminar" of *El primer toque* elaborates on the main episodes in Knox's biography, his family origins and education at St Andrews, his conversion to Protestantism in the 1540s under the influence of George Wishart, who was burnt at the stake in 1546, and his early pastoral activity in Berwick after his nineteen-month sentence in the galleys. His inspired sermonic activity in the 1550s drew the attention of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, and of a group of merchants in London and their wives, to whom Knox often gave spiritual counsel. His reformist leanings did not match the political developments in England at that time, when Mary I had imprisoned the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, and Protestants were burnt at the stake in Tyburn and Smithfield. Knox set out for the French city of Dieppe in 1554, and there he wrote *letters* to the "afflicted church of Christ" before he settled in Frankfurt, where a community of some two hundred English exiles had sought refuge. Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera do not delve into the particulars of Knox's troubles in Frankfurt, where his sermons on

the particular liturgical practices of the exiled English church and his fierce criticism against the ineffectiveness of British Reform in the reign of Edward VI started a backlash that forced him to leave for Geneva. There he helped out in the edition of the Geneva Bible with his notes, parted with Calvin and became pastor of the congregation together with his friend Christopher Goodman. He also wrote two political treatises and *The First Blast* during a short stay in Dieppe before returning to Geneva. It was around this time when Knox configured his authorial voice as that of a prophet. While this is an aspect of Knox's scholarship that has long been noted and related to the political use of "social prophecy" in the context of English reformers, Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera consider it a distinctive trait of Knox's style that connects his religious and political thought, and is recurrent in his text: "Este precepto, digo, con la amenaza añadida, junto con lo demás de lo que se habla en el mismo capítulo, no sólo a Ezequiel sino a cada uno a quien Dios coloca de guardián de su pueblo y su rebaño (y guardianes son aquéllos cuyos ojos Él abre y cuya conciencia Él azuza para exhortar al impío), este precepto me obliga a expresar mi conciencia sobre este asunto" (125). Knox is aware of his role as a prophet and his conscience as being a moral guide through which his connection with the divine is expressed. Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera's analysis illustrate this point as it is articulated through the relationship between gender and political theory. When Knox threatens that "los hombres que reciban de mujer autoridad, honor o cargo, quedan con toda certeza persuadidos de que al mantener así el poder usurpado se declaran enemigos de Dios" (172), he is not suggesting a rebellion against women or the state, but an action against tyranny which is a responsibility shared with the people. It is an act of disloyalty towards God to keep in place a ruler whose deeds run contrary to Him, thus inverting the classical concept of rebellion against the monarch: "Si la rebelión primera y auténtica es la del tirano contra Dios, la rebelión segunda, la de la nobleza o el pueblo contra el tirano, no es tal, pues supone la defensa de la ley de Dios" (46). Being essentially a Calvinist position, this is an apt reminder that contract theory between king and humanity is mediated by God, through men's conscience, and that later arguments in favour of regicide in the seventeenth century with Charles I had necessarily to justify themselves in religious terms. Although Knox was tapping into sixteenth-century theories of resistance, as the authors of the

introduction rightly remark, this did not prevent him from receiving all manner of criticisms from other ministers of diverse Protestant leanings.

Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera's study includes a thorough selection of reactions to Knox's text, and one by the minister Matthew Parker, who had not been in exile, shows outrage at a sentence he read in one of the books he had browsed in his last visit to London: "Una dama no puede ser por la palabra de Dios gobernante de un reino cristiano" (85). Parker's reaction is revelatory in that it points at a discrepancy between a misogynistic discourse and one that uses the tradition of literature against women to justify a political view. Knox had to print a "note to the reader" soon after the publication of *The First Blast* acknowledging himself as the author (since the tract had been published with no reference whatsoever to author, imprint, or place of publication). Knox had intended to reveal this information in a *Third Blast*, but he could not even complete a second one. Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera's introduction details accurately the correspondence about this matter between Calvin and Elizabeth I, through her secretary of state William Cecil. Soon after she came to the throne upon the death of Mary I, she had to establish her political position in the face of powerful enemies. *The First Blast* did not contribute to it and, regardless of what Elizabeth I might have thought of Knox's verbal tirades against women, political muscle was her primary concern. Thus she let it be known to Calvin, who replied in a long letter with the hope of dissipating Elizabeth's mistrust towards exiled British Protestants in Strasbourg and Geneva. Calvin pointed out that Knox's published his *First Blast* without his knowledge or consent, that he did not subscribe to the tenor and opinions in it, and that Knox might have wrongly interpreted a conversation they once held about women and political power. Calvin's justification did not convince Elizabeth, who would bear him a grudge for life, but at least it did not make matters worse. Again, Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera convincingly argue that Knox overdid his misogynist ranting by believing that this would benefit the political stance of the Protestant cause, but he miscalculated the fact that a Protestant queen would be next in sitting on the British throne. We may add to the authors' analysis that what these reactions further suggest is that blunt misogynistic remarks were no longer accepted in the halls of realpolitik.

Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera's translation into Spanish reads very fluently and keeps the original tone of sermonic denunciation, preserving the argumentative force of Knox's abundant biblical references as a subtext, which the editors annotate and expand in footnotes that do not smother the original text. With this edition and complete introductory study, the authors have made a much-needed contribution to Knox studies within a Spanish context while entering a dialogue with Knox's finest scholarship in its original.

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