

*Cervantes, Felipe II y la España del Siglo de Oro.* Jesús Botello López-Canti. Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica 111. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2016. 212 pp. €28.

---

Jesús Botello explores, in this rewriting of his doctoral thesis, the enormous impact that Philip II's politics had on Cervantes's work, especially in *Don Quijote*; and he does so to such an extent that this study takes credit for being the first to explore how the most characteristic "twitches" of the Philippine reign came to significantly shape, in concrete and meaningful ways, more than a few elements of the Cervantine production. Thus Botello divides his study into five parts: in the first part, he studies the fluctuating and ambiguous (first laudatory, later critical) image of Philip II, which follows from the sonnets to Isabel de Valois, the elegy to Diego de Espinosa, the epistle to Mateo Vázquez, the two songs dedicated to the Felicísima Armada, and *La Numancia*. In the second, Botello connects quixotic *escritofilia* with the excessive bureaucracy of the kingdom, which would lead both to have (and cause) serious problems of efficiency, both in reality and in the judicial sphere. In fact, the criticism against the ineffective judicial system of the moment is the aspect to which the third part is dedicated, as it makes use of Sancho's sentences during his brief *baratarío* government. The fourth part argues that Philip II's unsuccessful attempt to revitalize and modernize the cavalry is ridiculed by Cervantes through his parodical *imitatio* of Amadís, and through the almost total absence of the cavalry element in the second part of *Don Quijote*, not to mention the decadence of the half-knight, half ill-fated hero (it should be noted here that Botello has published a must-see edition of the first book of *Amadís de Gaula*, in Juan de La Cuesta—Hispanic Monographs). Finally, in the fifth and final part of the study, the author reads the space of the cave of Montesinos as a Cervantine metaphor for Philip II's passion for relics (in fact, as the author recalls, "the Prudent" king is known as the first large-scale collector in Spain), as well as his well-known image of seclusion, which would keep him away from his father, famous and appreciated as a figure of action and openness (thus insisting here on an image against which Botello warns at the beginning of his work).

Botello's study diverges from the repeated and simplistic image that has dominated criticism so far, reflecting in Cervantes's work not only the same old topics associated with Philip II and unable to connect the breadth and complexity of his reign with many of the key aspects of *alcaláino's* main work. This is an element that the author argues is worth recognizing, as he constructs a study full of nuance and that is easy to read, interesting not only for scholars of Cervantes, but all those curious about the hermeneutics of Hispanic Golden Age literature. This study, which takes as its guiding principle Manuel Fernández Álvarez's maxim according to which Cervantes's time is, to a large extent, that of Philip II's, handles with ease a not-inconsiderable quantity of authorized sources and becomes, to its own merit, compulsory reading in our fully understanding Cervantes's complex referential universe.

Oriol Miró Martí, *Universidad Internacional de La Rioja*