

poet's enigmatic verse is explored with a fine eye for detail, and the multiple points of contact and adaptation are quite revelatory.

SUSAN BYRNE

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

BLANCA SANTOS DE LA MORENA. *'Aunque es el cielo de la tierra': Lo religioso en el Persiles en diálogo con la obra cervantina*. Vigo: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2019. III pp.

Its erstwhile neglect and discredit long past, Miguel de Cervantes's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* has in the last few decades generated remarkable scholarly interest, culminating with the 400th anniversary of its publication in 2017. Blanca Santos de la Morena reminds us with her short monograph that there yet remains much critical work to be done in order to thoroughly understand such a central theme as religion in Cervantes's last work. By parsing various confessional strands of the text, and their relationship to Counter-Reformation Spain and post-Tridentine doctrine, Santos de la Morena charts a useful roadmap for future studies.

The introductory chapter begins by rehearsing the perennial question of whether Cervantes's ideological worldview was heterodox or orthodox, vexing descriptors that early interpretations often ascribed, respectively, to *Don Quijote* and *Persiles y Sigismunda*. Yet even the latter work has polarized critics who have found it, with respect to doctrinal concerns, either apologetic or iconoclastic. Much of Santos de la Morena's labor here and throughout the book consists of reviewing this interpretative legacy bequeathed by such figures as Castro, Casalduero, Forcione, and Avallé-Arce, as well as that of more recent critics like de Armas Wilson, Nerlich, Lozano Renieblas, and Armstrong-Roche. The proposed originality of Santos de la Morena's study lies in mobilizing not biographical conjecture but intertextual evidence: placing the religious thematics of *Persiles y Sigismunda* into dialogue with Cervantes's other works while eschewing entirely hypothetical figments of a Cervantes whose deathbed embrace of orthodoxy, as some critics fantasized, might have imbued his last work with similar dogma.

Elementary historical background is furnished in the second chapter, such as how the Council of Trent affected the representation of certain topics by fictional authors and, especially, in sacred genres like hagiographies, saints' lives, and *autos sacramentales*. Cervantes's writing also betrays Tridentine influence, particularly in its treatment of themes like death, suicide, duels, and marriage. As Santos de la Morena is quick to note,

however, this does not imply that his texts accord with or adhere to the principles laid out by the ecumenical council. While like many of his contemporaries he flouts the prohibition of representing suicide, for example, the author's consistent condemnation of the practice in both secular and religious terms is quintessentially Cervantine insofar as he "somete el tema a reflexión" and "presenta varias posibilidades de actuación y de asimilación ante un mismo problema, mostrando distintas vías de elección" (38).

The following three chapters engage, respectively, with the themes of witchcraft and astrology, providence, and forgiveness. Largely in line with prevailing approaches of Cervantes's time, *Persiles y Sigismunda* regards astrology as a science with a degree of moral and academic validity, if not entirely free of tension with the Church. Though practitioners of astrology in the text are nearly all masculine and connoted as positive, witchcraft, in contrast, is portrayed as a malignant art practiced almost always by ethno-religious minorities. The work's providentialist elements nourish a rich dialectic between free will and fate, as well as the related concepts of virtue and fortune. Santos de la Morena identifies similar tensions surrounding what she calls a "poética del perdón" in *Persiles y Sigismunda*, particularly between mercy and justice and charity and revenge, for which forgiveness and repentance serve as morally superior alternatives to the vindictive exigencies of the honor code (67).

Chapter 6 tackles the contested meaning of pilgrimage in a work whose protagonists travel to the holy city of Rome as a pretext for avoiding decidedly mundane conflicts. While tracing the divergent paths of prior critical approaches, Santos de la Morena includes stopovers on Marianism, penitence, Edenic metaphors, allegory, and the symbolism of Catholic temples. A counterpoint of sorts is offered in Chapter 7, which briefly acknowledges the presence of marginalized religious identities in *Persiles y Sigismunda*, namely that of the *moriscos*, and suggests that "en Cervantes la literatura acostumbra a ser un medio de denuncia social y de llamamiento a las autoridades para enmendar los males de una sociedad en profunda crisis" (93).

While recognizing the abiding complexity of Cervantine religiosity, the final two chapters venture to conclude that perhaps its most salient value is that of liberty. Despite Auristela's eleventh-hour vacillation over whether to devote herself to monastic life or marry Periandro, her ultimate decision to pursue the latter option in the face of the familial and dynastic complications it implies affirms the importance of choice. Such freedom inheres for Santos de la Morena in the significant detail that their nuptial vows, exchanged without the presence of a priest despite being near a church, shun the

strictures of Trent that emerge in various guises throughout *Persiles y Sigismunda*.

In a sense, this return to the “sempiterno tema cervantino” of “la libertad” allows Santos de la Morena a corresponding leeway to bypass the critical fork between the novel as an exponent of orthodoxy or heterodoxy (99). Indeed, her study often evokes a complexity that its notable brevity is insufficient to resolve, leaving the reader to puzzle over which side of a given polemic she comes down on. One wonders, too, how the author would square this exaltation of freedom with the plight of the Moorish characters that, curiously, informs her most unequivocal yet highly debatable assertion that “las páginas cervantinas no están vaticinando la expulsión sino reafirmando y defendiendo a posteriori la controvertida decisión de Felipe III” (93). Perhaps what is most apparent is that “lo religioso” of the book’s title is almost always coextensive with Catholicism.

Nevertheless, *Lo religioso en el “Persiles”* supplies a helpful overview of longstanding scholarly discussions, registers a number of intertextual linkages across the Cervantine canon, and signals that in a text which of late is finally receiving its due there yet remain major lacunae. Appropriately, the book plots a number of waypoints for future work, while establishing Santos de la Morena as a key voice in what are sure to be ongoing debates about a pairing as ideologically and critically charged as religion and Cervantes.

PAUL MICHAEL JOHNSON  
*DePauw University*

ALISON SINCLAIR. *Putting it About: Social Rights and Wrongs in Spain in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Legenda, 2019. 315 pp.

Son pocas las ocasiones en las que la publicación de un volumen no inédito de investigación académica constituye una aportación tan importante al campo de los estudios literarios y culturales de la España decimonónica como es el caso de *Putting it About: Social Rights and Wrongs in Spain in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Como la autora anticipa ya desde las páginas de presentación, el volumen está compuesto por una selección de textos publicados anteriormente unidos por un mismo tema: la idea del bien y el mal, lo correcto y lo incorrecto, normas y desviaciones sociales de un patrón establecido, y cómo ese concepto ha sido construido y diseminado por medio de la literatura y pliegos sueltos a lo largo de todo el siglo decimonónico. Se trata de un tema al que la autora ha dedicado buena parte de su larga y productiva trayectoria profesional.