

*Avatares de lo invisible: Espacio y subjetividad en los Siglos de Oro.*

Luis F. Avilés.

Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica 116. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2017. 227 pp. €24.

Luis F. Avilés's new book offers four stimulating and well-argued studies on the triangulation between the uses of space, the display of the self, and the formation of the imperial subject in a number of well-known pieces of the early modern literary tradition. He assigns a particular spatial notion (in this order: "Distance," "Court," "Frontier," and "House") to each of the four main chapters that structure the study, which opens with a brief preface and closes with a conclusion, a bibliography, and an index. "Distance" offers a meditation on the invisible/disappearing lover in the classical, medieval, and Renaissance tradition, going from Cicero's "distant friends" to Cervantes's Dulcinea. "Court" focuses on what the author calls the "care of the self" in a thought-provoking analysis of Antonio de Guevara's admonition *Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea*. "Frontier" (which can also be read as "border," "limit," or the liminal in general) refines some of the arguments of a previous essay on the *novela morisca* *El Abencerraje*, in particular those related to the political valences of friendship and trust. Finally, the "Home" becomes in the picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* a series of empty houses—physically, spiritually, or both—that are nevertheless pivotal to the revelations of Lázaro's life as much as in the brutal critique of ecclesiastical figures. Avilés is concerned with the processes of deployment and disappearance of the self, with the dynamics of intimacy and promotion, and with the intricacies of the secret and its revelation. His central question, and the one that ties all his primary sources together, can be summarized as this: what are the expectations of individual agency for the subject when faced with the cultural parameters that define him? Drawing on the work of Foucault, Butler, and Agamben, among others, he aims to examine the political implications resulting from the tension between what can and cannot be seen (or what is concealed from vision) in a number of (mostly male) literary characters from all walks of life, from the poor to the courtesan. He deftly intervenes in a debate that has gained new traction in recent years with important monographs by scholars of the Spanish Baroque like Fernando R. de la Flor, Christopher Johnson, and Frederick A. de Armas, albeit with less emphasis on the visual and more on the political. Given its focus on the Spanish Renaissance, *Avatares de lo invisible* complements nicely with what is perhaps the most stimulating monograph on the subject of the last two decades, Jeremy Robbins's *Arts of Perception: The Epistemological Mentality of the Spanish Baroque, 1580–1720* (2006).

One of the greatest concerns of the era, as Avilés suggests in the pages devoted to Antonio de Guevara, was the performance of power. A monarch was required not only to train his vision but also to learn to project an image in accordance with his nature so that, in the end, he was able to realize his maximum ruling potential without having to

resort to trickery. This decidedly anti-Machiavellian model of royal supremacy had to be articulated through subtle mechanisms of dissimulation that revolved around an effective use of the visual, as much in the monarch's presence as in his absence. Although there already exist important studies on this phenomenon like Robert Bireley's *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe* (1990) and Jon R. Snyder's *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (2009), little has been done in relation to Habsburg Spain. Many of these preoccupations, this book reminds us, were already felt decades earlier and fully explored in the fictional realm. The veils of these imagined worlds allow Avilés to focus on the playful aspects of subjectivity, exploring what he calls the "games of self-fashioning" (203) that made these texts so pleasurable to read and yet so useful as indispensable tools of the early modern survival kit. If the pages on Cervantes and Antonio de Guevara are an excellent *puesta al día* of the current debates on the topic, the ones devoted to *El Abencerraje*, which reject an Orientalist view of the Muslim enemy, seem to engage more directly with recent scholarly work published in the anglophone world. All in all, the book accomplishes what it set out to do, constituting an excellent resource not only for scholars well versed on these questions, but for students as well.

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*San Nicolás de Tolentino*. Lope de Vega.

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This first-ever critical edition of *San Nicolás de Tolentino* (ca. 1614) is a welcome addition to our knowledge of Lope's little-known hagiographic drama. Roy Norton divides the volume into two parts: an extensive introduction and the play text. Preceded by a preface, the introduction is 164 pages and consists of a substantial and well-researched study, which is followed by a brief description of the play (including a detailed summary of its plot and a thorough overview of all its actions), notes on the work's textual history, the editorial criteria applied, and a bibliography.

The solidly erudite study, which provides both contextual material and analysis of the play, has six sections. The first gives a comprehensive account of the veneration of Saint Nicholas of Tolentine (ca. 1246–1305), the Augustinians' first saint in Spain. It explores the possible factors that might have prompted Lope to compose the play, including patronages and the saint's impressive record of miracles as great potential for the exploitation of theatrical *tramoyas*. Section 2 argues that while Lope most likely had relied on González de Critana's *Vida y milagros de san Nicolás de Tolentino* (1612) as the main source of his play, he also allowed himself a good dose of poetic license in order to meet the expectations of his audience in the *corrales*. Such manipulation of ha-