

Julián Bravo Vega, Esteban Manuel de Villegas: *tomo 1: Fortuna crítica: tomo 2: La obra literaria: manuscritos e impresos: tomo 3: Estudio biográfico*, Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1989. 207 + 307 + 231 pp.

This three-volume work (a fourth is promised on Villegas's style) began life as a doctoral thesis entitled *La obra Poética de Esteban Manuel de Villegas (1589-1669)*, which the author successfully defended in September 1988. Clearly little time was lost between submitting the thesis and presenting it for publication. The major reason for what might seem an otherwise unwarranted rush into print was the author's wish to have the thesis published in time for the IVth Centenary of Villegas's birth. This is a perfectly justifiable reason, but it does not lessen one's sense that the makings of a fine book on Villegas were lost somewhere en route. As it stands, this three-volume work bears all the hallmarks and defects of a doctoral thesis that was produced for the specific reason of gaining a doctorate and not for reading by a wider public. There are for instance far too many footnotes, many (if not most) of which could and should have been incorporated into the text, particularly the page references to quotations. Some of the footnotes are excessively long which puts a premium on the reader's patience. One might legitimately wonder why a footnote that is, for example, some twenty to thirty lines long was not incorporated, whole or in part, into the main body of the work. The sheer length of it would suggest at least that it was of some importance. Unfortunately, too many of the footnotes are there simply to display the author's erudition or, the hallmark of the doctoral thesis, relentlessly to underline the author's background research, knowledge of sources, etc.

The division of the work into three volumes (perhaps reflecting the original lay-out of the thesis) has its merits, but also its drawbacks. One of these is the annoying repetition of material from one volume to another, though this is nothing compared to the repetition of, for example, quotations within a volume, particularly noticeable (and irritating) in vol. 1 *Fortuna crítica*. To give some examples: the quotation on p. 79 has already appeared on pp. 69-70; two quotations on p. 83 repeat footnote 209 of p. 75; a quotation on p. 82 reappears a mere two pages later on p. 84; footnote 237 (p. 85) repeats a quotation on p. 83 which itself had already appeared in footnote 209! If the reader is left at times with a sense of *déjà vue* it is scarcely surprising. More careful editing could have ensured that such repetition did not take place; indeed, a

more conscientious editor might well have come to the conclusion that a one (or at most two) volume work, suitably compressed and concisely presented, would have done the job just as well. As it was, there was always the lingering suggestion in the back of this reader's mind that some of the material had been strung out rather to make a three-volume work when one would have been sufficient.

Having said all that, there is in fact here much to praise and commend. Dr. Bravo Vega has carried out a conscientious investigation into the life and works of a poet who though little known today was in his own times an important and polemical figure. Esteban Manuel de Villegas rubbed shoulders with the greatest literary figures of his age —Lope de Vega, Góngora, Quevedo, the Argensola brothers—, was a leading light among the Aragonese intellectuals of the early seventeenth century, and relentlessly pursued a classical style that was already out of fashion when he began writing. As a result, he proposed Greek tragedy as a model for drama, and Horace and Anacreon for poetry. Although contemporary with Lope and Góngora, he could have been living on another planet for all the impact and influence their innovations had on him. He harked back to an earlier age, the age of the philologist, the classical concept of the *poeta philologus*. This stance and his determined and unrepentant defence of it brought him into conflict with most of his contemporaries, which only succeeded in marginalising him during his own lifetime. He was undoubtedly a prickly character in an age that abounded in such, and the engraving that he included on the frontispiece of the *Eróticas. Primera Parte*, which was intended to show the author as the rising sun that would soon eclipse or outshine the rest of the stars in the firmament, did nothing to endear him to his fellow writers.

The best of the three volumes is, to my mind, the third or *Estudio biográfico*. Here Dr. Bravo Vega has drawn us what must be one of the most complete pictures of the daily life, travails, sorrows, successes and failures of any Golden Age writer. We see Villegas as a child in Nájera, a schoolboy and student in Madrid, and a law student in Salamanca. His formation is humanistic; the classics and philology played a large part in his education, which is not surprising given that his teachers and friends were some of the most famous and knowledgeable humanists of the day: Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, Cristóbal de Mesa, Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, Francisco de Cascales. But behind the educated man was Esteban Manuel de Villegas the family man, son, brother, uncle. The family's predilection for *pleitos* and for investing continuously in *censos* and *juros* may not have produced much long-term economic benefit for them, but for the would-be biographer they are an indispensable tool for unravelling the private side of family life in the seventeenth century. Dr Bravo Vega has patiently and thoroughly tracked down protocolo after protocolo and in the process built up a fascinating picture of the social life of this Riojan family. Esteban's mother in particular stands out _a formidable woman who held the family together after her husband's early death in 1592 and who spared no effort to further the careers of her many sons. As with all good biographies, we feel we are dealing with real people facing real problems. But the picture also encompasses other figures —literary, political— who impinged on the life of Esteban Manuel de Villegas, and it thus serves as a wider commentary on the literary life of the first half of the seventeenth century.

Volume 2 *La obra literaria: manuscritos e impresos* is an exhaustive (and at times exhausting) account of all the writings produced by the pen of Villegas. Dr Bravo Vega painstakingly reviews all the evidence for Villegas works that have not come to light but whose existence has been mooted in the past, identifies all extant Villegas works and, his greatest success, tracks down the hitherto lost *Códice de Cuenca* which contains eleven autograph letters from Villegas to Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado plus a number of loose *Disertaciones críticas* which he would later collect together with a view to publication. The value of this manuscript undoubtedly lies in the letters to Ramírez de Prado. Private letters from literary men of the Golden Age are few and far between (excepting the massive correspondence of Lope de Vega with the Duke of Sessa, and the epistolaries of Góngora and Quevedo) and the discovery of new ones is always to be welcomed. Villegas's are a mixture of personal news and an effort to insinuate himself into Ramírez de Prado's good graces. He was hoping at the time for the latter's support in getting his *Disertaciones críticas* published, hence their inclusion in the manuscript, and lost no opportunity for blowing his own trumpet, as the following extract demonstrates: "En la pasada remittí una dissertación sobre un lugar de Valerio Catulo hasta aora mal entendido o, por mejor decir, totalmente ignorado de sus intérpretes, como lo habrá visto Vs. por mi explicación, tan genuina que no admite otra". On another of his dissertations he writes: "Es a mi parecer la tal dissertación de lo más fino que en la crítica se puede escribir". No attempt at hiding his light under a bushel here!

Indeed, the picture that emerges from these letters to Ramírez de Prado simply confirms the one already partly established by Bravo Vega elsewhere: Villegas was a pompous, arrogant, self-satisfied man who was continually amazed to find that precious few others shared his high opinion of himself. It is a pity therefore that the author did not make greater use of these letters when compiling the biography. Maybe he was put off by the portrait of the man that he glimpsed behind the words; he should not have been. The biographer does not make the man, it is not his fault if his subject is less than superhuman. The Esteban Manuel de Villegas who fawns and boasts to Ramírez de Prado, is still, warts and all, a fascinating character.

The weakest of the three volumes is, as I have already indicated, the first, *Fortuna crítica*. Although containing much material of merit and an enviable list of sources, it is at times tedious and long-winded. The author might have borne in mind Gracián's saying that "Lo bueno, si breve, dos veces bueno". There are also a number of errata, some typographical (needless and unforgiveable in a work that was set up on computer), some of content: the Mendoza mentioned in Moratín's letter to Conti on p. 79 must surely be Antonio Hurtado de and not Diego Hurtado de. Between pp. 145 and 146 something, presumably a whole line, has disappeared from the computer screen, while a page later (in perhaps an heroic and ironic effort to make up for the previous omission) the computer has repeated the last six lines of p. 146. Other errors noted in reading were: p. 27 of vol. 2 —the folio numbers for Carta V should presumably be 26r or 26v to 27r or 27v and not 27v-30v as written here; as they stand they make no sense since the next item, we are told, occupies folios 28r-29v, and *Carta V* anyway is quite short and could not have taken up more than a folio and a bit. There is a similar

lack of care in some of the references: Simón Díaz's bibliography is titled *Bibliografía de la literatura hispánica* and the usual siglas used for it are BLH ; Bravo Vega uses BHL for a work which he titles *Bibiografía de la literatura española* . On p. 112 of Vol. 2 BNM MS 3979 appears as 2979; the "quiso" of l. 9, p. 134 of the same volume I assume ought to be "quise^"; and the Francisco Cascali Mercenensi of p. 174 (vol . 2) is presumably Murcenensi . A random check through the *Indice onomástico* also threw up some inconsistencies.

These criticisms and caveats should not, however, detract from the value of this work. Dr Bravo Vega has done a fine job in rehabilitating an interesting and worthwhile figure of Spain's Golden Age, a writer who pursued the classical path of Fray Luis de León and others long after it was unfashionable. His efforts, though doomed to failure in his own lifetime, were popular a century later and serve to remind us that the poetry of the early seventeenth century in Spain, was not monolithic or solely determined by the debate between *gongoristas* and *conceptistas* . There were other currents and styles in existence then and Dr Bravo Vega is to be congratulated for having brought one of them, their arch-exponent Esteban Manuel de Villegas and his circle of fellow humanists to our attention.

Trevor J. Dadson
University of Birmingham

Fernando GONZALEZ OLLE, *Introducción a la historia literaria de Navarra*, Pamplona, Dirección General de Cultura del Gobierno Vasco - Institución Príncipe de Viana, 1989, 207 páginas.

Existe la opinión, bastante generalizada, de que en Navarra ha sido más bien escaso el cultivo literario; sin embargo, a juicio de Fernando González Ollé, Navarra ha contado con ingenios literarios de mérito suficiente para ocupar un puesto en la literatura española, tanto por su expresión románica como por su expresión eusquérica. Y buena prueba de ello son los 16 capítulos que componen su libro, pues en ellos va dando cumplida cuenta de autores y textos navarros, desde los orígenes hasta finales del siglo XIX, sin pretender —según declara al comienzo— una visión completa de la historia literaria de Navarra, ya que para dicha empresa habrán de realizarse todavía muchas monografías parciales. Con todo, los materiales analizados permiten definir características que se repiten una y otra vez en las páginas que los conforman: la literatura navarra se configura íntimamente entrelazada con la historia, no sólo porque de acontecimientos históricos se hace materia literaria, sino también por la demostrada voluntad, entre los escritores de esta área geográfica, por la exactitud histórica, que se manifiesta en ocasiones explícita y puntualmente a través de advertencias, por lo general irrelevantes, en las correspondientes obras.