



CHRISTINE BLACKSHAW¹

Mount Saint Mary's University - blackshaw@msmary.edu

SARIBEL MORALES-RIVERA²

University of California, San Diego - s5morale@ucsd.edu

CAMBIO DE TIEMPO/CAMBIO DE MEMORIA HISTÓRICA: *EL MINISTERIO DEL TIEMPO'S* SEASON TWO FINALE AND FELIPE II'S HISTORICAL LEGACY

RESUMEN

En este ensayo examinamos el episodio final de la segunda temporada del programa televisivo *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, titulado “Cambio de tiempo,” en el contexto del legado histórico de Felipe II. Empezamos con un resumen de la fama negativa que ha tenido el monarca dentro de España. Esa fama nació al principio de siglo diecinueve, y fue influida por historias extranjeras de su reinado. Hablamos también de los defensores de Felipe II, como el historiador estadounidense William Thomas Walsh. Después de esa reseña historiográfica, analizamos cómo el creador de la serie Javier Olivares presenta y problematiza los mitos históricos sobre Felipe II, creados por los liberales que lo exorciaban y los conservadores que han recordado su reinado con nostalgia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *El Ministerio del Tiempo*—Felipe II—historiografía—los mitos históricos.

¹ **Christine Blackshaw** earned her doctorate at the University of Virginia in 2005, where David Gies served as her mentor and dissertation director. Since 2005, she has been teaching all levels of Spanish at Mount Saint Mary's University, where she was recently promoted to the rank of Professor. Inspired by Gies's tireless scholarship, Dr. Blackshaw has published, or has articles forthcoming, in *Decimonónica: Journal of Nineteenth-Century Hispanic Cultural Production*, *Hispanic Journal*, *Hispanófila*, *Romance Quarterly*, *Hispanic Studies Review*, the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, and the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*. Recently, she edited an anthology for Albatros Hispanófila's new series *Diálogos Peninsulares*, titled *Historia y mito en la televisión y el cine español*.

² **Saribel Morales-Rivera** earned her Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and History from Mount Saint Mary's University in 2018, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She began her college career at the age of seventeen, and she completed her degree in three years. In spring 2018, Ms. Morales-Rivera was awarded the Flanagan Prize, given to the member of the senior class who, in the opinion of the faculty, best represents the traditions of Mount St. Mary's University in Scholarship, Academics, Service and Mission. Ms. Morales-Rivera is currently pursuing her doctorate in History at the University of California, San Diego.

Dr. Blackshaw and Ms. Morales Rivera have another co-authored article, “El Escorial as a Metaphor in Spanish Romantic Discourse,” forthcoming in *Hispanic Studies Review*.

ABSTRACT

In this essay we examine the Season Two finale of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, “Cambio de tiempo,” within the context of Felipe II’s historical legacy in Spain. We begin with a brief account of the king’s negative reputation within Spain, born largely in the early nineteenth century, and influenced by foreign accounts of his reign. We discuss as well some of his defenders, such as North American historian William Thomas Walsh. Following that overview, we underline ways in which the series creator Javier Olivares presents, and problematizes, historical myths about Felipe II, both among the liberal historians who excoriated him and the conservative ones who looked back at his reign with nostalgia.

KEYWORDS: *El Ministerio del Tiempo*—Felipe II—historiography—historical myths

I. INTRODUCTION

Over three decades ago, J.N. Hillgarth posited that two of the most salient characteristics of Spanish intellectual history are “the quest by Spaniards for the meaning of the history of Spain” and “the way this quest and Spanish history itself have been influenced, oversimplified, and distorted by the power of certain myths” (23). More recently, in his 2008 study *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity*, Henry Kamen contends that most myths Spaniards maintain about their past “lack evidence to support their veracity,” and often they “undermine observed historical fact” (*Imagining Spain* x-xi). Nonetheless, they “reflect reality for those who created them and continue to believe in them,” and they continue to inform Spanish political thought, strategy, and symbolism (*Imagining Spain* x).

The popular historical science fiction show *El Ministerio del Tiempo* provides ample evidence for Kamen’s thesis. First, he proclaims that the Early Modern period, even in post-Transition Spain, “continues to occupy a central role in myth-making because it supplies material for new conflictive attitudes in a country which has not yet achieved a stable national identity” (*Imagining Spain* 208). We see this not only in the prominent role that Alonso de Entrerriós and Diego Velázquez perform in the Ministry’s work, but in the time setting of several episodes, such as 1588 Lisbon (“Tiempo de Gloria”), 1491 Castile (“Una negociación a tiempo,”), 1520 Salamanca (“Tiempo de pícaros”), and 1604 Madrid (“Tiempo de hidalgos” and “Tiempo de esplendor”).³

³ Alonso de Entrerriós is a sixteenth-century soldier in the *tercios castellanos* who, after disputing a superior’s orders, is sentenced to death. The night before his death in 1569, Ernesto, Chief Operating Officer inside the Ministry, visits Alonso in prison and offers him his life and freedom in exchange for serving the crown in the Ministry. The ministry has also recruited Diego Velázquez, the sixteenth-century painter, to paint facial composites.

Concomitant of this focus on the Early Modern period is the conviction that Spain itself has been “a cohesive reality, eternal and unchanging” (Kamen, *Imagining Spain* 35). Implicit in this historical imaginary is a political agenda “designed to emphasize that all the peripheral communities of the peninsula were inseparably linked to Castile and could not be separated from it” (*Imagining Spain* 33). In their analysis of the first season of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, José Carlos Rueda Laffond and Carlota Coronado Ruiz contend that the show presents a “trivialized version of Spain” that neutralizes “the specificity of territorial identities and peripheral cultures” (99). Indeed, neither Diego Velázquez nor Amelia Folch betray regional accents, even though they are from Seville and Barcelona, respectively.⁴ Moreover, the temporal setting of the group’s missions—whether it is eleventh-century Spain or the War of Independence—do not impede characters’ ability to understand one another, since they all speak what Rueda Laffond and Coronado Ruiz call a “neutral Spanish” (99).

Finally, in its portrayal of Isabel *la Católica* in “Una negociación a tiempo” (Season 1, Episode 4) and Felipe II in “Cambio de tiempo” (Season 2, Episode 13) the show propagates, but also problematizes, numerous historical myths about Spain’s monarchs. In the case of the former, Isabel *la Católica*, with the help of a rabbi, Abraham Levi, establishes the Ministry while declaring firmly that “la ambición de nadie, ni siquiera la de un rey, debe hacer uso de [un viaje al pasado]” (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 8). In the fourth episode of season one, “Una negociación a tiempo,” the trio travels back to 1491 to undo the mistake of Levi’s execution, which Isabel’s husband Fernando has apparently orchestrated. The queen readily agrees to write a letter to Torquemada “de mi puño y letra” to spare Levi’s life, and she reminds Cardinal Cisneros that she, not Fernando, governs Castile (Fernández, Schaaff, Olivares, and Olivares 42). This brief visit, as well as the three-season series *Isabel*, which the Olivares brothers also created, reflects Isabel’s popular legacy as a just queen who kept the power of the clergy, the nobility, and even her husband, in check.⁵ She is also vehemently opposed to the Inquisition’s unjust punishment of innocents, particularly her allies, which supports another common myth about her: that although she instituted the Inquisition, she is not responsible for the abuses that occurred during and after her reign (Lafuente 5-23).

By contrast, in the opening scenes of the season two finale, “Cambio de tiempo,” Felipe II displays all of the tyrannical tendencies for which he has been famous, or infamous. Des-

⁴ Amelia Folch is a young university student living and studying in Barcelona in 1880, when Irene Larra, Head of Logistics inside the Ministry, recruits her.

⁵ See, for example, Diego Clemencín’s *Elogio de la Reina Católica Doña Isabel* (1821), or Modesto de la Fuente’s study (1850-1860).

perate to undo the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the king calls upon the Secretary of the Ministry, de las Cuevas, to help him travel to the past. When the secretary refuses to comply with his sovereign's wishes, Felipe II has the Inquisition torture him, eventually to death. After travelling to 2016 Spain, where he discovers that Spain has lost her empire and that the current king, Felipe VI, is a Bourbon with limited power, Felipe II decides not only to undo the Armada's defeat, but also to take over the Ministry and become the King of Time. When Salvador Martí, the Head of the Ministry, tries to stop him, Felipe II murders him in cold blood.

According to Kamen, the cases of Isabel *la Católica* and Felipe II in Spanish historical memory "epitomize the unequal treatment accorded to their monarchy by Spaniards" since the nineteenth century (*Imagining Spain* 51). On the one hand, the supporting documents for the Constitution of Cádiz suggest that the reign of Isabel and Fernando was the age of splendor for constitutional monarchy, which nineteenth-century liberals believed had existed since the time of the Visigoths. On the other hand, the Cádiz constitution "laid down clear limits to royal power, so that it would not revert to 'absolutism'" (Kamen, *Imagining Spain* 68), and in liberals' minds it was Felipe II and his father Carlos I who ushered in Spain's age of absolutism. As the deputy Álvaro Flórez Estrada proclaimed, "las Cortes de Cádiz no han hecho otra cosa que restablecer alguna parte de nuestra antigua Constitución, que en mejores días formaban el paladín de nuestra libertad y cuya mayor parte estaba destruida por (...) el fraude y la violencia durante los reinados de Fernando V, Carlos I y Felipe II" (qtd. in Álvarez Junco 219). Kamen asserts that throughout the nineteenth century and into the present, Spaniards have vacillated between these two monarchs—one the epitome of good, the other the epitome of evil—and eventually they have "ended up being unsure about all the monarchs had on offer" (*Imagining Spain* 51). In other words, both Isabel I's and Felipe II's historical legacy and mythicization betray the nation's ambivalence toward the monarchy itself. Indeed, this ambivalence has intensified in the past several years. In January 2014, as Juan Carlos I turned 76, only 49% of Spaniards still supported the institution; this figure climbed modestly to 56% after Felipe VI's coronation, according to a survey that the center-right newspaper *El Mundo* conducted on 8 June 2014 (Sigma Dos).

Around this time, the state-sponsored Radio y Televisión Española, or RTVE, began a series of historical television shows that underscore the importance of a strong, traditional monarchy as guardian of national stability (Soliño 164). The first season of *Isabel*, for example, establishes a contrast between the future queen's virtue and political savvy and the licentiousness and corruption of her older brother Enrique IV's court. Similarly, *Carlos, Rey Emperador's* pilot episode presents the Spanish king as innocent, inexperienced, and earnest while showing scenes of his French counterpart, Francis I, frolicking with his mistress, markedly indifferent to his wife and matters of the state.

The purpose of this essay is to examine “Cambio de tiempo” within the context of Felipe II’s historical legacy and how this legacy evolved from the nineteenth century to the present day. What follows is a brief account of the king’s negative reputation within Spain, born largely in the early nineteenth century, and influenced by foreign accounts of his reign. We will also discuss some of his defenders. Following that overview, we discuss ways in which Olivares presents and problematizes historical myths about Felipe II, both among the liberal historians who excoriated him and the conservative ones who looked back at his reign with nostalgia.

2. OPPOSITE COLORS

In his biography of the king, Scottish historian Robert Watson remarked, “[n]o character was ever drawn by different historians in more opposite colors” than Felipe II (334). To his defenders, and most especially to many Spaniards over whom he ruled, Felipe II was *El Prudente*, “devoted to his people and his church [...] the saintly, stoical successor to Saint Louis, the living symbol of the Counter Reformation, trying to steer a moderate course between the extremes of Catholic ultramontaniam and cynical erastianism” (Rule and Tepaske ix). For his detractors, who included his subjects in Flanders and Italy and members of the English and French courts, Felipe II was “the symbol of tyranny, the upholder of religious bigotry, and the champion of Castilian supremacy” (Rule and Tepaske ix).

Among his most ardent defenders was the Catholic U.S. Historian William Thomas Walsh. In his discussion of the Armada, the tragedy that precipitates the king’s call to de las Cuevas in “Cambio de tiempo,” Walsh eschews the notion that Felipe II wanted to expand his kingdom, or that he was governed by anything other than his devout Catholicism (665). He describes the king as “being deeply hurt in his heart and soul by the loss of his fleet... [and] extraordinarily afflicted over not having rendered so great a service to God” (666). In Walsh’s view, Felipe II was a martyr of sorts, for “[r]ather than leave this problem to his successors and spend his own life and pleasure, like a Louis the 15th or Pope Leo X, Philip II deliberately chose days and nights of anxiety and toil, the sort of slow crucifixion at his desk in the Escorial” (703). In another chapter discussing the Inquisition, Walsh implicitly compares the Spanish king’s struggle with the Protestants and Turks during the sixteenth century to both the Christians’ seven-hundred-year battle with the Moors in Spain and, more recently, the Napoleonic troops and the Nationalists’ struggles against the Second Spanish Republic. Walsh defends the king’s reliance on the Inquisition as follows:

...there could never be a religious war in Spain as long as the Inquisition lasted. Other countries would groan presently under the long tournament of the 30 years’ war. Catholics would feel the scourge of that child of liberal ideas— everybody, in fact, but the authors of liberalism... it would

take a French revolution and a Napoleon to break down the barriers raised by Ferdinand and Isabel, and to set the enemies of Christendom free to begin by gradual steps to prepare for 1931 and 1936. (702)

The reader may easily draw the connections between *el Prudente* and *el Caudillo*, Francisco Franco, both of whom allegedly waged religious wars in defense of Catholicism and Spain. Not surprisingly, Walsh's biography, as well as the German writer Ludwig Pfandl's biography, which was similarly hagiographic, were the only biographies of Felipe II that were published in Spain during the Franco era.

Although he had many Catholic and Spanish defenders, Felipe II also had many enemies. Among them were the Dutch, the English, and the French. Three centuries later, during Fernando VII's final *década ominosa* (1823-1833), writers such as Telesforo de Trueba y Cossío and the future duque de Rivas (then Ángel de Saavedra) used Felipe II in their literary works to criticize, without naming, their contemporary king. During the First Carlist War, liberal Spaniards, who largely controlled the theater in Madrid, likewise harkened back to Felipe II to warn audiences about the future that awaited them should Fernando VII's brother, Carlos María Isidro, be victorious in the war of succession (Ballesteros Dorado). The two best-known plays about Felipe II from this period were Jose María Díaz's *Felipe II* (1836) and José Muñoz Maldonado's *Antonio Pérez y Felipe II* (1837). Modesto de la Fuente, in the fourth volume of his extensive *Historia General de España*, describes Felipe II as "ávido de poder y enemigo de toda ligadura que sujetara o restringiera el principio de autoridad" (402). These early nineteenth-century liberal depictions of Felipe II's reign endured throughout the nineteenth century into the Second Republic. Indeed, Lafuente's liberal interpretation of Spain's history "remained the standard history of Spain" until it had to compete with Cánovas de Castillo's eighteen-volume *Historia general de España* (1890-1894) (Kamen, *Imagining Spain* 8). Writers during the Second Republic embraced the negative image of Felipe II, and liberal writers, such as Américo Castro, in his famous *España y su historia*, continued promote the myth of Felipe II as a despot throughout the twentieth century. Kamen also describes how he and another historian, Geoffrey Parker, who both published biographies of Felipe II in 1997 and 1978, respectively, have attracted ire among reviewers in Spain for not presenting the king in a more unfavorable light (*Imagining Spain* 61; 217).

Javier Olivares himself penned a novel about Spain's Second Habsburg king, titled *Felipe heredarás el mundo* (2015). In a blog for *20 Minutos*, the author describes how he used the genre of the historical novel to

contar esos espacios vacíos entre un hecho histórico y otro, indagando en qué pasó en la personalidad y en la vida de quienes los protagonizaron, de quienes son el motor (a veces la víctima) de los

mismos. Nunca idealizando ni convirtiendo a sus protagonistas en héroes intocables o malvados de una pieza. (“Felipe II: ¿De quién es un imperio?”)

Olivares goes on to describe how Felipe II, “una figura tan esencial para entender nuestra Historia,” was a complex figure, and that penning the novel raised more questions than it answered:

¿Qué pasó para que el joven que le negaba a su padre más dinero ante la miseria de Castilla se convirtiera en el viejo que persiguió hasta a la muerte a quienes no querían pagar los impuestos? ¿Qué vivió quien fuera lector ávido del *Amadís* para permitir fechorías tan poco caballescadas como las de Antonio Pérez? ¿Para tratar como un extraño que ponía en peligro su poder a su hermano Juan de Austria, que tan generosamente se jugó la vida por él? (“¿De quién es un imperio?”)

These are similar questions to the ones Amelia raises to the king during their confrontation in “Cambio de tiempo,” the season two finale, which Olivares believed was going to be the series finale, and his final chance to comment on Spaniards’ uncritical consumption of historical myth and memory.

3. “¿CÓMO SE ME RECORDARÁ EN EL FUTURO?”

The decisive defeat of the Armada was devastating to Felipe II and to Spaniards at the time, who saw their invasion of England as a crusade against Protestantism. While the setback did not signify the end of Spanish maritime supremacy, it did allow England to become a formidable rival. It also secured Elizabeth I’s throne, allowed Protestantism to become deeply entrenched in England, and it became a source of national pride there. As Watson describes it:

[t]here was nothing to be heard in England and the United Provinces but the voice of festivity and joy [...] All Europe trembled at the thoughts of its success. For although it can hardly be supposed that Philip was so romantic as to flatter himself with the hopes of attaining universal monarchy, yet it is not to be imagined that he aspired only at the conquest of England and Holland [...] Not can it be believed that anything less would have satisfied his ambition, than the subjection of every protestant state in Europe, and the utter extirpation of the reformed religion. (139-140)

While modern-day historians such as Kamen and Parker contend that the invasion of England was a matter of self-defense (Kamen, *Spain 1469-1700* 153; Parker 323), the myth persists, both in liberal Spain and elsewhere in Europe, that Felipe II invaded England out of a desire to expand his empire and to limit political and religious freedoms. The American Catholic historian Walsh, of course, insists that the king was defending religious liberty in England:

Spain has been lampooned in English history and literature as a place of despotism whence the King and the Inquisition had banished the very notion of liberty, which thereupon fled for refuge to Protestant Albion. No mind free from the prejudice of that tradition can fail to see that the reverse was true [...] It was not only the Catholic Church that suffered. In this country so lately emancipated from the Pope and the common conscience of Christendom, there was no longer free speech, freedom of conscience, or freedom of opinion in any matter that might be of concerns to persons rich or powerful enough to punish them. From 1586 on the country was full of professional informers, “moralizers,” and “State decipherers.” (629; 632)

In Walsh’s assessment, as well as that of the Francoist historical imaginary of Spain, Felipe II was the defender of the “true” faith and liberty, for according to him, Spaniards “were always ready to fight and die” for freedom (629). His commentary brings to mind young Carlos’s description of his primary school education during the late-Franco era in the popular Spanish television series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*:

Para nuestro maestro la culpa de todos los males la tenía la perfidia...la perfidia de los anglosajones que para colmo son protestantes. A los 8 años sabíamos que los protestantes eran culpables de todo...claro que los ateos y los comunistas eran todavía peores. (“El retorno del fugitivo”)

While don Severiano’s focus in *Cuéntame cómo pasó* is on the Spanish-American War—when the United States left Cuba “huérfana de la madre patria [...] y provocaron una guerra para arrebatarnos nuestro glorioso pasado” (“El retorno del fugitivo”)—the interpretation is similar to Walsh’s about the Armada: Spain has been a victim of foreign, anti-Catholic invaders. Indeed, as Linda Bartlett states, “for don Severiano the cause of the disaster [of 1898] does not lie with the Spanish, but with the ‘perfidia’ of Americans who, like the British before them, snatched from Spain what was rightfully theirs” (223).

It is no coincidence, accordingly, that Olivares would choose the Armada’s defeat, such a meaningful occasion in Spanish (and global) history, as the decisive moment when Felipe II determines to break the Ministry’s longstanding rule that “la ambición de nadie, ni siquiera la de un rey, debería hacer uso de ello” (Sainz and Olivares 8). In the opening scenes, the king reacts to the news of the Armada, lamenting “[h]e fallado a mi reino. He fracasado...” (Sainz y Olivares 3). In a subsequent scene, when his secretary Mateo Vázquez de Lea says that God, not the Ministry, is in charge of human history, the king confesses his crisis of faith:

¿Dónde estaba Dios cuando mi flota se hundió? Organicé esta empresa para llevar la verdadera fe a Inglaterra. Mis ejércitos combaten a los seguidores de Lutero en los Países Bajos y al infiel en el Mediterráneo... ¿A quién tiene Dios que atender que haya hecho tanto por él? Que me perdone Dios si le ofendo...Pero es hora de cambiar la Historia. (9-10).

The king's devastation reflects the historical accounts of his reaction to the Armada's defeat (Kamen, *Philip of Spain* 276; Parker 323). It also serves to humanize the king, who is more concerned with the loss of lives and the "gloria del reino," which he believes to be more important than his own life (Sainz and Olivares 9).

After Felipe II receives news of the Armada tragedy, and he decides to call on de las Cuevas, the opening credits serve as an interlude between 1588 and 2016 Spain. In the scenes immediately following the credits, the audience observes various developments in the characters' personal lives. Alonso awakens to find that his girlfriend Elena has left him (and in a later scene he will blame their breakup on modernity and democracy). Irene's budding relationship with Rocío, by contrast, demonstrates the social advances that liberalism and democracy have provided for women like her: she is able to express her sexuality, and to utilize her talents as head of logistics for the Ministry. Amelia, who in her own era is pressured to marry and have children, is able to be her true self in 2016 Spain, and to have a leadership role in the Ministry.

Following Felipe II's confrontation with de las Cuevas, which concludes with the Inquisition's taking the latter away to be tortured, the patrol group learns of its latest mission: they have to travel to 1809 and find Agustín Argüelles, one of the principal authors of the Constitution of Cádiz. Significantly, as Irene reminds the group, Argüelles is responsible for Article 172 of the constitution, which delineates all of the limitations the Cortes wished to place on the king's authority.

No puede el Rey impedir bajo ningún pretexto la celebración de las Cortes en las épocas y casos señalados por la Constitución, ni suspenderlas ni disolverlas, ni en manera alguna embarazar sus sesiones y deliberaciones. Los que le aconsejasen o auxiliasen en cualquiera tentativa para estos actos, son declarados traidores, y serán perseguidos como tales. (51)

As we have discussed above, Argüelles and his fellow liberal Cádiz deputies were instrumental in constructing a history of Spain in which a constitutional monarchy was not revolutionary, as it had been across the Pyrenees. Rather, it was a natural political evolution from Medieval times to the Catholic Monarchs, which Carlos I and Felipe II had curtailed with the suppression of the Castilian *comuneros* and the Aragonese *fueros*, respectively. Argüelles's era, accordingly, is not just the seed of the modern era and foundation of Spain's democracy, as Salvador states (Sainz y Olivares 12). It is also the birthdate of liberal Spain's historical myths about Felipe II, myths that informed liberal Spanish political thought, strategy, and symbolism throughout the nineteenth century.

While Amelia, Alonso, and Julián travel back to 1809 to spare Argüelles's life—in a scene that is a clear allusion to Goya's *El 3 de mayo*, another mythicized moment in modern Spanish

history —Salvador is alerted to de las Cuevas's disappearance. Meanwhile, in 1588, the king and Vázquez explore de las Cuevas's Ministry, and, realizing that de las Cuevas and the Ministry have been keeping secrets from him, Felipe II determines to travel to 2016 —the latest dates in the Ministry's notebook. In his conversations with Salvador, Felipe II fails to understand contemporary Spain, where the Americans are the world leaders (not Spain), the current king is a Bourbon with very limited authority, there is no Inquisition, and ordinary people visit El Escorial and see the bedroom where he spent his final days. Felipe II is likewise not prepared for Salvador's remarks as a "ciudadano libre," who openly criticizes the king's obsession with power, glory and wealth and reminds him of his own mortality (Sainz Rosas and Olivares 25-26). Angered, Felipe II murders Salvador, declaring to Vázquez: "Voy a cambiar el pasado y con ello, este futuro tan mediocre. Todo será distinto. Todo" (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 28). In the scenes that follow, Felipe II becomes the kind of Spain and of Time by combining his sixteenth-century instruments of authority —a dozen soldiers and the Inquisition— with modern-day weapons (the pistol), communication tools (the iPhone), and history books that recount his military failures. When Amelia, Julián, and Alonso return from their mission, they discover that the Ministry has changed. Everyone is wearing black uniforms, a white shirt, and a black tie, leading Julián to remark, "¿Acaso todo el mundo está de luto?" (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 29). Salvador's office, which Ernesto now occupies, is more organized and austere, as is Ernesto himself, who reminds the group of the Ministry's motto, which is not, notably, "El tiempo es el que es" but rather "disciplina, discreción y sentido" (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 31). The severity of the Ministry's environment reflects the common image of Felipe II as a "grave, solemn, almost funereal" king who preferred to wear black and had a melancholy disposition (Kamen, *Philip of Spain* 223).⁶ It also brings to mind the Franco dictatorship, as one journalist has contended (García). For example, as the group attempts to understand the alternative 2016, a biographical documentary about Felipe II is playing on the television in the background, and the narrator comments that the king "sobrevive a los tiempos por la gracia de Dios" (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 35), bringing to mind Franco's nickname as "el caudillo de España por la gracia de Dios."

When the group meets with Ernesto, instead of Salvador, they begin to suspect that something is amiss. Ernesto's remarks about Argüelles further arouse their suspicions: "Ese tal... nos estaba dando muchos quebraderos de cabeza en el siglo XIX... Pretender que España tenga una constitución... Hay que ser majaderos" (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 30). In this alternative 2016, the group's mission has changed from saving Argüelles to murdering him so

⁶ In reality, the king wore a variety of colors. However, he was faithful to the Spanish custom of wearing black for a year after there was a death in the family and, having lost many members of his family, including four wives and several sons, it must have seemed as though Felipe II was always wearing black.

that he does not pen the Constitution of Cádiz and thus limit the king's authority. Because the group was in 1809 when Felipe II took over the Ministry, they are the only characters who are aware that Felipe II's 2016 is an alternate reality.

As the hilarious weather report and the “Yo soy España” commercial demonstrate, the king has maintained the Spanish Empire: England, the Americas, African nations, the Netherlands, Germany, and even Asia are all *España*. The endurance and the expansion of *Las Españas*, however, has signified a loss of national and personal identity among the characters. Amelia, Alonso, and Julián return from their mission to find a number of unfamiliar faces in the Ministry, leading Julián to wonder if their mission has changed to one of hunting aliens (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 29).⁷ The next day, Amelia reveals that a number of Spanish cultural products, such as *Don Quijote*, *Lazarrillo de Tormes*, and Goya's paintings, no longer exist. Prominent national figures, such as Jovellanos, Picasso, and Buñuel, have never come into existence.

Initially, neither Julián nor Alonso seem concerned with these changes because of the developments in their personal lives: Maite is alive in this alternate reality, and Alonso and Elena are married and expecting their first child (her use of birth control, which Alonso failed to understand, had been a source of tension between them in previous episodes). The men's first evening in the alternate 2016, accordingly, appears to be a dream come true, as they both confess to Amelia the following morning (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 43).

However, after a double date at Alonso and Elena's apartment, Julián and Alonso are less content. Although she is alive, Maite is nothing like her departed counterpart. For example she refuses to allow Julián to set the table, dismissing it as “cosa de mujeres,” when the Maite that Julián knew would have insisted on sharing domestic duties (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 48). Elena likewise speaks only of her baby, whom she plans to name Felipe or Isabel. Felipe II's *discurso semanal* mesmerizes both women, as they mindlessly repeat the “credo” that God sent the king to Spain to protect “la gloria del reino” (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 52). That night, neither Alonso nor Julián appear comfortable with the changes Felipe II has made to Spain, and to their respective lovers. By the next morning, however, Alonso decides to accept the alternate 2016, because it means that he can realize his dream of having a child with Elena. Julián, however, urges Alonso to understand what the men have lost: “no son ellas. Esta sociedad de mierda las ha cambiado. Son sumisas. Tienen su mismo cuerpo, su misma cara, su misma voz... Pero no tienen su misma alma... ¿Por qué no quieres reconocerlo?” (Sainz-Rozas and Olivares 59). A call from Irene interrupts the men's conversation, and the subsequent scene, in front of door 816, drives home Julián's point, as we shall see.

⁷ This might also be an allusion to *Men in Black*.

In the alternate 2016, Irene is a mousy brunette who is married with children. In a scene reminiscent of the pilot episode, but with the roles reversed, Amelia seeks out Irene to share a cognac, and the two talk about Amelia's recent mission to 1809 with Julián and Alonso. Much like Amelia in the pilot episode, Irene is envious of Amelia's opportunities, unable to imagine a reality in which women have the same opportunities as men. She likewise remarks on the fact that they are drinking cognac together, and she confesses that she has very few friends, "y las que tengo solo hablan de los niños, recetas de cocina" (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 46), echoing Amelia's comment from the pilot episode: "¡Es tan difícil encontrar una mujer con la que poder hablar de política, arte... de cosas importantes! ...[mis amigas hablan de] maridos, hijos y la moda de París (Olivares and Olivares 7). However, unlike Amelia, who is heterosexual, Irene is suppressing her homosexuality in Felipe II's 2016, living in fear that the Inquisition is watching her, making sure that she does not surrender to her sexual urges. She is shocked to learn about the "otra Irene," who is independent, head of logistics, and "no es una servil secretaria" (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 47). When Irene meets with Alonso and Julián in front of door 816, she informs them that Amelia has traveled to 1588 Spain, and that they need to escape before they are imprisoned or burned at an *auto de fe*. She also asks the men about the "otra Irene," and she begs them: "conseguid que la Irene que exista sea ella y no yo" (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 60).

Until this moment, Julián and Alonso have been blissfully unreflective about the sociopolitical consequences of Felipe II's actions. This is largely because, unlike Amelia, the "cerebro del grupo," the men are woefully ignorant about Spanish history (Olivares and Olivares 25). Alonso is ignorant about the past because he was living in it: Ernesto recruits him in 1569, during Felipe II's reign, when, in Alonso's own words, "era el rey quien decidía todo y sus súbditos obedecíamos" (Sainz-Rosas and Olivares 12). Julián, who is from present-day Spain, is a reflection of the problem Olivares laments in an interview with *20 Minutos*: "[e]n España es tal el desconocimiento y la falta de cariño a la historia, y somos tan acrílicos con ella, que hablar de la historia no es ver ya de dónde venimos sino ver lo que nos está pasando" (Yague). For example, all Julián knows about Agustín Argüelles is that there is a Metro station named after him. He is neither nostalgic for the Spanish Empire, nor is he critical of it; he is simply indifferent until the resurgence of the Spanish Empire, manifested in Felipe II's alternate 2016, affects him personally.

By contrast, as a university student from 1880 (when Irene recruits her), Amelia was born during what historiographers call the "siglo de historia," or the time when history was an obsession and "informa todas las manifestaciones del hombre romántico así como del romanticismo" (Moreno Alonso 60; 134). She often has to explain the historical importance of their missions to her partners and, presumably, to Spanish audiences. In "Cambio de tiempo" Amelia explains who Argüelles is, and she immediately recognizes him from the photo.

She is also the first to recognize what Spain has lost culturally, socially, and politically from Felipe II's takeover of the Ministry.

Although Amelia opposes Felipe II's takeover of the Ministry, she does not appear to embrace her century's myths about his being a tyrant. Rather, when the king confronts her, Amelia asks him what happened to the king who dreamed of being Amadís de Gaula, who endeavored to make Madrid as cultured a city as Brussels, and who criticized his father's excessive taxation of Castile (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 56). Even when Felipe II threatens to have her executed, Amelia contends, “dentro de cada hombre, sea campesino o rey, hay un ser humano que siente y padece. Que tiene sentimientos” (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 57). The king, however, contends that progress is overrated, and that “gobernar es hacer realidad lo posible” (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 57).

As the king clings desperately to his authority, Alonso travels to 1533 to visit the seven-year-old prince Felipe in his sleep. Moments later, he sends a photo of the prince to the king informing him that unless he releases Amelia, and does exactly what she requests, the king will die as a young child, forgotten by history, unable to have great military conquests or to build the Escorial. Realizing that he has been defeated, the Felipe II frees Amelia, and he agrees to accept the Armada's defeat. He further confesses that he has committed many errors during his reign, but that, ultimately, “es imposible gobernar un reino donde nunca se pone el sol” (Sainz-Rosas y Olivares 66). As if responding to future critics from the nineteenth or twentieth century, the king wonders to Amelia about his historical legacy:

FELIPE ¿Cómo se me recordará en el futuro?

AMELIA Como un rey con sus defectos y sus virtudes. Como todo ser humano.

(*Felipe asiente*). (Sainz Rosas and Olivares 66)

Once he understands that becoming the King of Time will not make him immortal, Felipe II makes one last request to Amelia, which we see her fulfilling during the episode's final, gloomy scene. It is 1598 and Amelia, disguised as a nun, visits the dying king, injecting him with the necessary morphine to make his passing relatively painless. As he dies, the king takes comfort in a childhood memory of his mother tucking him into bed, and with the young prince promising his mother that he does not know if he will be a good king like his father. Even as he dies, Spain's second Habsburg king never ceases to worry about his duties as a monarch.

4. CONCLUSION

While Felipe II has been the object of fascination for both his enemies and his supporters, for the most part he remains a mystery. As John C. Rule and John J. Tepaske contend, like the Escorial—his monumental palace, pantheon, and administrative center—the king’s “stern character hides behind it a confusing maze of character patterns that have sought explanations from that day to this” (ix). Felipe II himself is somewhat responsible for this aspect of his legacy, for according to Parker, although he “committed more of his thoughts and decisions to paper than almost any other ruler, he deliberately left others in obscurity” (xvi). The king also “refused to let his life be written during his lifetime,” according to Kamen, and this allowed for creative accounts of the most dramatic, and tragic, events of his lengthy reign (*Philip of Spain* xi). To this day, Felipe II remains an object of interest and, at times, ridicule, both inside and outside of Spain. Some more recent examples include his appearance in the popular video game *Civilization VI*, in both *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*, in the 2008 Spanish movie *La conjura de El Escorial*, or even in Olivares’s recent novel about the king, *Felipe heredarás el mundo*.

The science-fiction format of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, which has Felipe II applying his “códigos de poder” to 2016 Spain, problematizes a tendency amongst some Spaniards to idealize the Spanish Empire, and the past in general, “cuando lo que debemos hacer es mejorar nuestro presente” (Yague). Alonso realizes this when, after cursing modernity and democracy, he finds that he prefers the Elena of post-2016 Spain to the one he meets in Felipe II’s alternate 2016. Similarly, Felipe II comes to the realization that maintaining the Spanish empire, even as King of Time, is a near-impossible feat.

Because Felipe II has agreed to remain in 1588, the audience may assume that he will not interfere with the penning of the Cádiz constitution in 1812, or with the specific mission involving Argüelles in 1809 Spain. In other words, the sixteenth-century king has accepted a future for Spain in which his descendants’ authority would be markedly more limited than his own. Consequently, Spain’s future as a democracy is also secure. By graciously accepting the emergent decline of the empire and the resultant birth of liberal democracy, Felipe II reclaims a part of his identity that had been lost to the empire and the monarchy.

The episode promotes a counter-myth to the Glorious Spanish Empire so heralded by Franco and conservative historians, that of the “centrality of the Spanish nation as an inviolable dramatic frontier and as a space of action that unites the characters, transcending the historical moment from which each of them comes” (Rueda and Laffond 91). In Olivares’s interpretation of Spain’s past, the decline of the Spanish empire allowed for liberalism to flourish in Spain. This myth, notably, remains unchallenged by the end of the episode, bringing to mind Lana Konstantinova’s argument that even as *El Ministerio del Tiempo* endeavors to deconstruct certain myths about Spain, “the writers leave others untouched, while also creating new ones” (291).

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