



## RESEÑA

Dille Glen F., ed. "*La Comedia Llamada 'Serafina': An Anonymous Humanistic Comedy of 1521.*" Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1979. xxvii + 114 pp. \$7.95.

In 1521, a scant two decades after the appearance of *La Celestina*, the genre-setting work that was to go forth and multiply with such long-lasting effect on both Spanish and world literature, there appeared simultaneously three works very much in the rich vein of their more famed progenitor. These were the comedies titled *Ypólita*, *Thebaida* and *Serafina*. The first two were printed by the same person and share consecutive pagination. The *Serafina*, bound with these two, has another printer but, like them, was set in Valencia. All are anonymous. The *Serafina* was printed once more, in 1546 (Seville) and with, again, the *Thebaida*.

In this century these celestinesque works have all been given modern editions; the *Ypólita* by P. E. Douglass (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1929), the *Thebaida* by G. D. Trotter and K. Whinnom (London: Támesis, 1969) and now, the *Serafina* by G. F. Dille. The only re-editing of this text since the 1546 printing dates from 1873, vol. 5 of Ribadeneira's *Colección de libros raros y curiosos*, reprinted one year later without changes. Thus this new and carefully prepared text is especially welcome in that it provides us with one more readily available modern printing of a work which is witness to the influence of *LC* in the sixteenth century. While these works did not themselves enjoy the wide popularity of Rojas's original--if the frequency of editions may be used as a guide--they were, as a group, so numerous and varied that they proliferated well into the seventeenth century, their collective longevity paralleling that of *LC*.

Given this state of affairs it is small wonder, then, that until recently most critical attention bestowed on these works specifically focussed on passages at which they did or, alternatively, did not compare with the great *Tragicomedia*. Dille recognizes this: "The *Celestina* ... is easily the second most important creation of Spanish literature and as such tends to eclipse subsequent works, especially those of the same general nature. As a result, most humanistic comedy...has suffered ill-deserved neglect" (p. ix). Owing to such invidious comparisons the personality of these works was submerged, the question of originality was sidestepped and individuality often ignored.

The recent editors of these celestinesque works, happily, have taken to heart the goal of specifying the individuality and independent worth of the texts they work on and this can only be seen as a very healthy advance over previous procedures.\* While such steps may seem to complicate the

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\* In addition to the *Ypólita* and *Thebaida* (LCDB 22), recent years have seen new editions of works by G. Gómez de Toledo (82), Feliciano de Silva (87), Francisco Delicado and others.

placid picture painted by simplified and direct comparison with *LC*, they also are helping us to see a more richly complex portrait of the tastes and temper prevalent in many aspects of sixteenth-century literary life. As readers we may prefer *LC* to the works created under its dominant spell, but we do, as Theodore Beardsley points out in a timely essay\*\*, have an obligation to cast our scholarly nets in a wider circle in order better to comprehend the reality and texture of the Spanish Renaissance.

Dille's *Serafina* is based on both of the sixteenth-century editions but wisely takes all but a few readings from the 1521 printing. It is presented in double-spaced format with running line numbers at every fifth line. This procedure has allowed Dille to place his variants and his annotations to the text [these concentrate on lexical items and explications of proverbs] at the back of the volume, leaving the reading of the text, apparently, an uninterrupted pleasure. In this instance, the scheme backfires because the reader is never signalled as to when textual material is in fact elucidated in the notes. While it is true that because the notes are keyed to line numbers one can easily work from notes to text, it is also unfortunately true that one less easily can work from text to notes, there being neither superscript numbers nor asterisks to indicate that further information may be found in the notes to the edition. Thus, one runs the risk of looking up what seem to be obscure references and finding that no further information is to be found. Unobtrusive asterisks would have been a boon to the reader and should have been provided for. As it stands there is too great a gulf between text and notes.

Dille's introduction is informative, if too brief. He rightly stresses the principally comedic value of the *Serafina* and does a nice job of anticipating for us the lively and ribald nature of the text, the salty language and the sexually explicit actions (whose function is comic rather than prurient), and the segments which are characteristic of the genre as opposed to those which anticipate later vogues of the Siglo de Oro. The remarks are based on appreciation as seen from the vantage point of the contemporary sixteenth-century reader, thereby preparing us for the necessity of reading the *Serafina* without prejudice. But surely the *Serafina* is deserving of a longer and more detailed study than we are given here. It would seem that limited space may have been a factor ["I have kept my introductory remarks to a minimum, opting instead to annotate the text as completely possible" (p. x).] in this compression, but it is to be hoped that Dille will print elsewhere a more generous analysis of this pert comedy. He is qualified to do so. He prepared this edition originally as a dissertation under D. W. McPheeters, a well-known *celestinista* and has, in addition, published articles on the *Ypólita* and the *Thebaida* (*Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 1 [1977], 187-93) and on the relationship of the *Serafina* to the *Celestina* (*Celestinesca*, 1, ii [1977], 15-20).

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\*\* See his essay in *The Present State of Scholarship in Sixteenth Century Literature*, ed. W. M. Jones (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1978), 71-110, esp. at 73-75.

This edition was produced by photographic means from typescript, a process more and more in favor with smaller publishing concerns. The introduction and the text, done with generous double-spacing, is attractive. The variants, notes to the introduction and the text are less elegant, owing to the bunched look produced by use of single-spacing and the perhaps unavoidable amount of underlining. Had the typescript been prepared on a machine with interchangeable elements (an IBM Selectric, for example), the substitution of an italic element for the parts requiring underlining in the single-spaced portions would have resulted in a notable aesthetic gain at little extra expense to the typists. Still, in an era of overpriced volumes that fewer scholars can truly afford, the price of this cloth-bound volume (\$7.95) is refreshing.

In sum, this is a welcome edition of a work within the celestinesque genre which, at the same time, has a claim of its own, made clear by Dille, to be read as a work with its particular merits in mind. While noting the annoyance of the lack of proper co-ordination of the text and notes, I think it is only fair to conclude by saying that Dille has made available a text far more reliable, accessible, and easy to read than has yet been produced and, for that, we are in his debt.

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Ragtkomedia de Calisto y  
Melibea. (toledo 1538)