

## RESEÑAS

ORLANDO MARTINEZ-MILLER. *La ética judía y la Celestina como alegoría.*

Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1978. 280 pp.

Students need not rush to buy what its foreword describes as the "definitiva exégesis" of *Celestina*. This book deserves to stand alongside similar erudite and ingenious works which seek to prove that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. It would be wrong to underrate the author's very considerable scholarship so far as late medieval Jewish ethical and philosophical writings are concerned, and perhaps the most valuable parts of the book are the three chapters (pp. 43-100) devoted to a survey of Peninsular literature in Hebrew; but he knows little of *Celestina* scholarship, and relies on Menéndez Pelayo, Maeztu, Garrido Pallardó, Serrano Poncela, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, and Américo Castro. (Four other items listed in the bibliography--Berndt, Gilman's *Art*, Castro Guisasola, and Maravall--are not utilized.)

The author departs from the premise that only a negligible minority of Jews were ever genuinely converted to Christianity, and to demonstrate that *Celestina* is an allegory (the term is, of course, misused), designed to show the *conversos* and the Jews that the disaster of the expulsion was due to their apostasy and neglect of Talmudic prescriptions, he supposes (1) that Rojas was a Judaizing Jew (who, nevertheless, "respected" Catholicism), (2) that he was "un gran hebraísta" (since he could not otherwise have read the untranslated Hebrew literature), (3) that his religious teacher was Isaac Aboab of Toledo, author of *Menorath ha-Manor* (and also the "amigo" of the *Carta*), (4) that *Celestina* is the work of one sole author, Rojas (5) that it was written between March and August 1492, (before the death of Isaac Aboab) and (6) that the mention of Petrarch in the Prologue is a complete red herring, so that we must look elsewhere for Rojas's sources. Of course he also posits a good deal more. We are to believe that while Calisto and Sempronio are Christians, *Celestina*, Pármeno, Lucrecia, Pleberio, Alisa, and Melibea are Jews; and we must accept a series of curious translations: "gentil" means "Gentile", "temor" is to be construed as "fear of God", "acostado sobre mi propia mano" must be interpreted as "lying in bed reading the Semah", and so on.

The reader is, consequently, left with the problem of trying to see how much of the whole ingenious structure might survive after the removal of some fundamental props, such as the authorship of Act I, the date of composition or the irrelevance of Petrarch, not to mention Rojas's mastery of Hebrew. Despite the fact that much of this book is quite demonstrably the most arrant nonsense, one is left at the end with the tiny suspicion that there might be some minuscule grain of truth in the more general thesis that Rojas was not totally unfamiliar with some Jewish beliefs and

practices, and that he felt some sympathy for Jewish ethics. But a quite different book, more cautious, much better informed, and less extravagantly imaginative, would be needed to demonstrate that even this minimal hypothesis needs be kept in mind.

Keith Whinnom

University of Exeter



### Argument Der dritten Wirkung.

Sempronio nach dem er Celestina auff der straff er-  
 raicht heu strafft er sy omb ir langksamkeit mit ainan-  
 der disputierend was fügo sy auff die angefangen ma-  
 teribrauch wolte/auff das lest gieng Celestina zu dem  
 hauß Pleberij vnd Parmeno belib in dem hauß Cele-  
 stina bey seinem bñlen Elicia.

[Argumento e ilustración del III Auto de LC.  
 De la traducción alemana de C. Wirsung, 1520.  
 Sempronio y Celestina llaman a la puerta de  
 la casa de ésta; Elicia asoma a la ventana.]

