

CELESTINESCA



RESEÑAS

Fernando de Rojas. *Celestina*. Ed. with intro. and notes by Dorothy Sherman Severin with trans. of James Mabbe (1631). Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1987. Hispanic Classics, *Mediaeval*. xx + 409 pp.

Dorothy Severin's side by side, Spanish/English, edition of *Cel* fills one of the obvious gaps in the bibliography of editions of F. de Rojas' work. It is, in fact, the *first* of its kind, so far as I know, and is for that reason a bit of a landmark. Furthermore, Severin has given us more than just a text with comparative readings--a fact to which I will return later.

The editor's introduction is an excellent, succinct survey of critical opinion about the central problems and themes of *Cel*: "Authorship and Early Printings," "Genre," "Meaning and Style," "Sources," and a brief but informative, five paragraphs on "Mabbe's Translation. This Edition." The three pages of selected bibliography of editions, books and articles is adequate for students reading in Spanish or English who wish to acquire more than just a passing acquaintance with the work's historical and critical place among Spain's great works of literature.

Severin has made a dual text from her fine 1969 Alianza Editorial Spanish edition (see Snow's *Cel* Bib., 1173), and the 1631 printed edition of James Mabb's second English translation of the work, *The Spanish Bawd. Represented in Celestine: or. The Tragicke-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea*. What makes this edition more than a Spanish edition with the text of an English translation by its side is the editor's attention to Mabbe's text, making clear with brackets with she has restored from the unexpurgated first translation of ca. 1598 (a single, incomplete manuscript edited and published in 1972 by Guadalupe Lacalle for Tamesis Press; see Snow's *Cel* Bib., 1024) and with italics for Mabbe's own additions and "embroideries" (i.e. those things which do not appear in the Spanish text). This procedure has produced a composite text that has required a true critical effort on the part of its editor. In addition, Severin has provided her own English translations of the prefatory letter and the prefatory and final verses which Mabbe did not translate.

The system of textual notation may seem confusing at first--notes for both the texts are on the same page with the Spanish version (in the

margins for the Spanish text and at the foot of the page for the English)-until one becomes accustomed to it. It is, however, a more economical use of space, since the text of the Spanish version was obviously reproduced directly from Severin's Spanish edition (i.e. cut and pasted to adjust to the English text at its side) which was set in smaller type and thus occupies less space on the page than the English version. This visual "desajuste", too, may bother some finicky readers. It should not. The decision not to reset the Spanish text was eminently sensible and has avoided adding error to Severin's accurate original text. The only alteration to the latter is the removal of most of the superscript numbers referring to the extensive notes and variants to the original edition. Those that remain (or are added in other places) refer mainly to readings found in the original *Comedia* or omissions in Mabbe's translation. The notes to the latter translation are much more varied and refer to English vocabulary, changes and misinterpretations by the translator in comparison to the Spanish text, and information which provides background. Both the texts use modernized spelling and punctuation--the English text follows those of Fitzmaurice-Kelly in his 1894 edition; the Spanish, of course, those of Severin's own 1969 edition.

One might be tempted to question (as I did at first) why the editor did not simply use a modern, less altered translation than Mabbe's 1631 version, thereby saving herself an extensive job of critical editing, if her aim was to provide comparatists with a dual language text. Setting aside problems of publication rights, would not Mack Singleton's translation, which attempts to render the work into English that is not only a faithful translation, but reasonably successful from the standpoint of rhetoric and register, serve the purpose? The answer is no, it would *not* have served as well. After reading the Mabbe text, one understands that no modern translator, even one who attempts to approximate Rojas' "style" in translation, can capture those elements to the degree that Mabbe did (I do not agree with Fitzmaurice-Kelly when he writes in the introduction to his edition of Mabbe's 1631 translation [London: Tudor Translations, 1894], referring to the differences in "manner" of Rojas and Mabbe, that they are "parasangs apart" [p. xix]). Mabbe was born within less than fifty years of Rojas' death. He had obviously heard Spanish spoken much as Rojas spoke it and his compositional style was fashioned by rhetorical models in English that were similar to Rojas' models in Spanish. It is the ring of authenticity of Mabbe's language of translation that makes Severin's choice an "acierto" for the English reader who is being introduced to *Celestina* as well as for the Spanish scholar interested in comparing the texts, Mabbe's occasional inflations and excesses notwithstanding.

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As I stated at the outset, this is an important and much needed addition to the bibliography of *Celestina* editions. It is a considerable bonus that it is so well edited and annotated.

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Esperanza Gurza. *Lectura existencialista de 'La Celestina'*. Madrid: Gredos, 1977. Biblioteca Románica Hispánica-Estudios y Ensayos, 257. 351p.

[Note. This review was originally penned by the late Dean W. McPheeters for publication in *Symposium*. Owing to a series of delays it did not appear there. Not long before his death, Prof. McPheeters sent his copy to me, knowing I would place it in my *archivo*. Although late, the review appears now--alas, posthumously--because of the interesting personal views it espouses. I feel certain Prof. Gurza will welcome this belated assessment, written a decade ago. After his retirement, Prof. McPheeters often told me he intended to offer me a note for this journal, a desire left unfulfilled. I hope these thoughts will fill that void. JTS]

It is perhaps inevitable that a great Spanish classic which in the last few decades has accumulated a bibliography rivaling that of the *Quijote* should be subjected to a variety of interpretations. One who has recently shown how *Celestina* is the product of conflicting medieval scholasticism and new Renaissance tendencies¹ is forced to admit the validity of the concept that during periods of violent transition, then as now, a work may indeed speak to our times in numerous ways, recalling what Cervantes' novel came to mean to the Romantics.

Professor Gurza in her first chapter, "Dos épocas de crisis y sus actitudes vitales," sets the stage for her future analyses, and in the second, "El existencialismo," reviews these philosophical trends, although the term "no designa [el] sistema o escuela" as it flourished in Europe between 1940 and 1950 (p. 46). Here one wonders whether the rapid changes in modern life styles and ideologies do not tend to date the thinking of