

Antonio de Nebrija. *Gramática sobre la lengua castellana*.

Ed. Carmen Lozano. Biblioteca Clásica de la Real Academia Española 17. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011. xii + 660 pp. €26.95. ISBN: 978-84-8109-910-2.

Antonio de Nebrija's *Grammar of the Castilian Language* is one of the most celebrated and quoted Renaissance books in the Hispanic field, and even the European: for it is the first comprehensive and systematic grammar (and the first printed one) of a Romance language. The date of its publication, 1492, a highly symbolic year of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, made the book a sort of epitome of Renaissance Spanish culture, being not only a simple grammar, but the assertion of a national language in the service of the fair and Christian politics of the Catholic Monarchs: indeed, few sentences of this period have become so famous as that of the prologue of the *Grammar*, which states that "the language was always the companion of the empire." Although this is not an entirely misguided interpretation of the *Grammar of the Castilian Language*, the book only started to be considered in this way from its reprint in the eighteenth century. As accurately summarized by editor Francisco Rico, in its time the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* was "a marginal work, almost an extravaganza in the Nebrija intellectual project."

Antonio de Nebrija, the first of the Spanish humanists (and perhaps the most important one), conceived the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* as an extension of a previous task: the translation into the vernacular, facing the original text, of his Latin grammar (or *Introductiones latinae*), ordered by Queen Isabella to urge nuns and women to learn Latin on their own. It was there Latin, and not Castilian, that was the actual axis of Nebrija's thought; as a humanist, Nebrija drank directly from the contemporary Italian culture, and particularly from the ideas of Lorenzo Valla. One of the values of this edition, besides its rigor, clarity, and comprehensive collection of explanatory notes, is precisely its location of the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* in the context of the whole work of the author and his complete intellectual project. This is achieved in two ways: first, through a detailed study by

Carmen Lozano, who analyzes the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* from the perspective of Latin grammatical theory (which is a new perspective in itself); and second, in its appropriation and wide selection of texts of Nebrija's Latin work — not always easy to find (*Paginae nebrissenses*), and made by a renowned specialist, Felipe González Vega.

The volume follows the guidelines of the Biblioteca Clásica de la Real Academia Española, directed by Francisco Rico, which aims to provide scientifically solid, comprehensive, and updated editions, clear in their presentation and also accessible to nonspecialists: his double note system, for example, with brief footnotes and extensive additional commentaries at the end, allows both a direct approach to the work, without scholarly distractions, and an academic deep reading. Among the various other materials that complete this edition of the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* are two particular highlights. A *Noticia bibliográfica*, by Julian Martín Abad, is necessary because such a book had not been described recently from a bibliographic point of view, nor had all the existing incunabula copies been properly registered; also included is a *Glosario nebricense*, made by Lourdes García-Macho, an expert in humanist lexicography. We must therefore greet the appearance of this edition as an important contribution to the knowledge of the *Grammar of the Castilian Language* and the figure of Antonio de Nebrija.

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