

*The Spanish Bawd*. James Mabbe.

Ed. José María Pérez Fernández. MHRA Tudor and Stuart Translations 10. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013. x + 402 pp. \$44.99.

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The tenth volume in MHRA's Tudor and Stuart Translations series makes a compelling case for the significance of James Mabbe's contribution to cultural transmission and literary networks of exchange in early modern Europe. Published in 1631, Mabbe's *Spanish Bawd* was the first translation into English of Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina* (1499), a prose work that was, from its inception, infamous and hugely popular, and that now lies at the very heart of the Hispanic canon. It is no surprise to learn, therefore, that Mabbe has been called "the first English Hispanist" (7). The volume sets out to enable access to *The Spanish Bawd* and to showcase Mabbe's translation as a work of literature in its own right; these aims are ably achieved.

The introduction to *The Spanish Bawd* is comprehensive and inviting. Pérez Fernández initially captures the reader's attention by outlining the notoriety of Rojas's work and by offering a taste of its modern reception history. (Adapted as a play, the tragicomedy shocked audiences at the Edinburgh Festival in 2004.) From the opening discussion, it is clear that *La Celestina* is of interest to the modern reader not only as a work of artistic value with lasting relevance, as a foundational text in the European canon, and as a succès de scandale, but also because it is firmly connected to early modern "processes of translation" (1). Mabbe's significance as a linguist and translator is also apparent; Pérez Fernández notes that, within a year of the publication of *The Spanish Bawd*, the impact of Mabbe and other Hispanists on "English perceptions of the Spanish canon" was clear (52). (Mabbe's growing importance to early modern translation studies may be further evinced by the fact that a second volume of his work will appear in this MHRA series in autumn 2015.)

The main body of the introduction is given over to an engaging exploration of the fate of *La Celestina* in its Spanish and English contexts. Pérez Fernández carefully assesses the Castilian origins of *La Celestina*, its complex afterlives, and generic indeterminacy; Mabbe's career as a translator, the influences on his work, and his involvement in London's literary milieu; and the textual history of *The Spanish Bawd* and its position within international networks of exchange at a key moment in the "linguistic and literary development of European vernaculars" (65). Comparing the 1631 printed edition of *The Spanish Bawd* with the text of Mabbe's earlier translation of *La Celestina*, in the so-called Alnwick manuscript, Pérez Fernández thoughtfully assesses Mabbe's handling of the tragicomedy. He deems the Stuart translator to be a shrewd interpreter and judicious reader. Having consulted not only the Spanish edition of *La Celestina*, but also its Italian and French translations, Mabbe is attuned to the nuances of language and, at varying points, he chooses to retain, highlight, omit, or tone down the arguments made by the characters. Overall, the introduction provides a wealth of valuable knowledge and the attention to detail is meticulous. However, in places, a more overt organizing principle would be welcome to guide the reader through this rich mine of information. One

further, minor quibble may arise, particularly for the anglophone student reader: in the introduction, Rojas is not explicitly identified as the original author of *La Celestina*. While scholars would undoubtedly recognize the implicit reference to Rojas, a postgraduate student unfamiliar with his tragicomedy might not.

The text of *The Spanish Bawd* is fully modernized and it has been carefully edited and annotated. The tragicomedy itself lives up to Pérez Fernández's contention that "*La Celestina* has not lost its capacity to seduce and scandalize" its readership and audiences (2). As a whore-turned-bawd, a witch, and a silver-tongued schemer with little sense of morality, Celestina is truly a "humanist's nightmare" (28). In each deceitful act and self-serving speech, the text's critique of humanist philosophy is everywhere in evidence. The volume's glossary of obsolete and archaic words and its lengthy bibliography are clearly presented and will certainly prove helpful to both the scholarly and the student reader. This edited volume is a valuable contribution to early modern translation studies; it opens this neglected tragicomedy to new audiences, offers an erudite consideration of Mabbe's text and its place within a complex web of literary and cultural exchange, and lays a solid foundation for future scholarship on *La Celestina* and *The Spanish Bawd*.

EDEL SEMPLE, *University College Cork*